

The Marines of Charlie Company

by Obsidian Fourteen

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Summary: This is a redux of the original story, the Marines of Charlie Company. David Carson's story is retold. Better, harder, faster, longer. Chapter 24 UPDATED! Update on status and such.

1. The Battle Aboard the Autumn

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter One****

****The _Pillar of Autumn_****

The depths of life are filled with unknowns; what is the destiny of man? Does he choose his own path through life, or is his course predetermined as if the hand of Fate itself were hovering over him, influencing man's choices that lead him down the road he 'chooses'? Fate, as it would seem, has a rather intriguing sense of humor, often choosing those who would be content to stay in the background of all that would happen and drag them to the front of the crowd, while pushing those supposedly destined for fame, glory and an eternal place in Human structure to the rear and obscurity.

* * *

>Thump. Thump. Thump.

That sound was constant to the interior on the surface of Reach as the last remaining survivors fled to the Pelicans, among whom was a young Marine Corporal by the name of David Carson.

"Go! Go! Pick it up!" he cried as his sniper rifle carefully picked apart the Covenant chasing what was left of his unit. He scrambled aboard the Pelican drop ship that was waiting for him and shouted for the pilot to get them the hell out of dodge, and the pilot had to agree. The Covenant had begun to close for a bombardment, and they

didn't have much time to get to the _Autumn_. Immense sadness washed over the young Marine as he took a seat next to his sergeant, Laurna Kelly. David's brother was still out there somewhere, and they were going to have to leave the man behindâ€|

As the Pelican ascended, David could see the once luscious forests on Reach engulfed in flames, as if the depths of Hell itself had engulfed them, and that description fit the Covenant rather well. From what little information David (or anyone else) knew, the Covenant were a band of different alien races all with the same religious beliefâ€|which apparently included the destruction of the human race. He recalled that the whole war had begun thirty two years prior, eight years before his birth, and humanity had been getting it's ass handed to it on a shiny silver platter at just about every battle ever since. In terms of tactics, the humans had the upper hand by far; Captain Keies and others like him had defeated the Covenant in a series of battles using tactics that few could ever conceiveâ€|but the Covenant had technology on their side.

He blew out a sigh as he removed the helmet that had been clasped to his head and set it in his lap. There was a thick coating of soot on his face and uniform from the plumes of smoke caused by the massive fires on Reach, and several of the other soldiers from what little was left of Charlie Company were about in the same shape. All hope was gone, now; Reach was Earth's last line of defense, and it had fallenâ€|just like all the others had been. David's hand clenched into a fist as he watched the forests and cities of Reach grow smaller and smaller in the background as a hangar seemed to close around the Pelican; they had arrived.

As the Pelican lowered down to the floor with a dull 'clang', the Marines already started to leap out of the back and assemble before the Captain, who had apparently come down to meet them. Since their Lieutenant had been KIA, Sergeant Kelly had assumed control of the squad and therefore stood at the front of their battered little unit that consisted of maybe a dozen men proudly, as if she had accomplished some great deedâ€|and deserved to stand that way. It was thanks to Sergeant Kelly that the few of them that were standing here were because of her leadership and guidance. The young man shifted slightly under the Captain's gaze as he felt the seasoned naval officer's eyes fall upon him, but David managed somehow to return the same steely stare he was receivingâ€|and the Captain found that amusing, apparently.

"What's your name, corporal?"

"David Carson, sir. See-Company."

The Captain nodded and gestured to David's weapon.

"Do you always keep your firearms in that condition, Corporal?"

"Not normally, sir; I just thought I'd make it look like I'd been doing something."

For a moment, David froze up; did he just smart off to his new Commanding Officer? If the Captain took offense, then there could be some serious problems for himâ€|but, if he didn't then things might be decent enough. For a moment, no one moved except for Sergeant Kelly, who gave David that familiar 'Way to go, idiotâ€|' look but

Captain Keyes soon smiled and began to laugh out of the blue. This went on for several moments before he stopped and congratulated the Marines for making it; they were the last ones to arrive. The _Autumn_ lurched and sped off and away as the Captain ordered them to take a rest; they'd need it. A chorus of 'yes sirs' and salutes was the response as the Marines filed out with David in the rear.

Since none of the Marines had been assigned quarters, they all just split up and found empty ones to collapse in. David found one not too far from the bridge and collapsed there after delivering his SR2-AM sniper rifle to the armory and picking up an MA5B just to be safe. The Covenant were all around Reach and would probably board the ship to execute the Humans aboard it; blasting the _Autumn_ to atoms would just be too simple for them. Once David managed to slog his way back to 'his' room, dropped the MA5B next to the door and collapsed on the bed in his armor without a second thought. His body was completely exhausted from the combat he'd seen, as was his mind. Sleep was quite necessary.

* * *

>Not too much later, a powerful bolt of plasma nailed the hull of the Pillar of Autumn and shook the entire frame of the ship. The jolt of energy jarred Marine David Carson from his restless slumber and caused him to sit straight up in his bed. His eyes were wide up and bloodshot from not enough sleep, he had just managed to get some rest right as the Pillar of Autumn had made its run from Reach; barely three hours ago. He had gone to sleep in both his uniform and armor, not comfortable but logical since he assumed that the Covenant would catch up with them at one point or another. Carson got to his feet and hit the light switch. His room was flooded with illumination, everything was made clear in the new titanium white light. He heard the shipwide intercom click on and alarms began to blare loudly.

"_Combat teams Alpha through Sierra, report to defensive positions immediately. This is not a drill, I repeat, this is not a drill!"_

It was Cortana, the Artificially Intelligence that pretty much ran the ship. Carson knew that the Covenant had boarded now, he yanked on his combat helmet, grabbed his MA5B Assault Rifle, slid the M6D Pistol into its holster, grabbed a few extra clips of ammo and then exited his room. He could already see that some combat had passed through here, plasma scarring and bullet holes marked the walls and some red blood was splattered onto the floor. Carson moved slowly down the hallway in a defensive position, for the moment he was all alone, but he felt that that was about to change damned quickly. And sure enough it did, there was suddenly a surprised yip as Carson ran smack into a Grunt as he turned the corner in the corridor. It uttered a cry of surprise and then its two friends turned to face Carson, he grinned evilly and then mowed them all down with an almost careless swing of his Assault Rifle, squeezing the trigger. They shrieked in pain as their blood was splattered all across the corridor, dripping thickly from the floor and ceiling. Carson's head snapped up as he heard approaching footsteps, he saw some other Marines in his squad approaching him from the opposite direction.

"Hey man, Captain wants you on the bridge, hurry up." Carpenter, one

of his friends, said.

Carson nodded and began to head towards the bridge, he took the most direct route possible and arrived there quickly. He stood at attention and then saluted when the Captain turned to acknowledge him.

"I've got a job for you son, the Master Chief is on his way here, he is unarmed. I want you to get to a specific point and escort him here. This is top priority, so don't let me down." Captain Keyes explained.

"Sir yes sir! Carson replied with a phrase that had been hammered into him during bootcamp, he turned on his heel and then left the bridge.

Cortana's voice suddenly sounded within his helmet and began guiding him to a specific point. When he arrived, Carson spotted some crewman fending off some Covenant and was about to engage the enemy when Master Chief suddenly appeared. Standing at seven feet tall and encased in green armor, he looked every inch the hero and God of battle that he was. The blast doors began to close, separating the warring Covenant and Humans for the moment. Carson cleared his throat to get Chief's attention.

"Sir! The Captain needs us on the bridge ASAP. You'd better follow me!" Carson called above the racket of battles throughout the ship.

The Master Chief nodded wordlessly and followed Carson deeper into the Pillar of Autumns interior. They entered a corridor filled with Humans and Covenant, a huge battle going on. A Grunt suddenly lobbed a plasma grenade through the air.

"Get clear Chief!" Carson called out just before the grenade exploded, sending a technician flying through the air and splattering his blood all across the bulkheads. A blast door began to close between the Humans and Covenant once again. The rest of the trip to the bridge was unhindered and soon they arrived there. Carson went to stand in an unused part of the bridge,

"Captain Keyes is waiting for you sir. He said, the Chief nodded soundlessly again and then left Carson. He had barely enough time to let out a breath he had been holding, before his helmet based comms unit crackled to life.

"_Carson! Get your ass to the messhall across from the bridge! We got trouble!_" Sergeant Kelly's voice boomed in his headset.

Carson ran out of the bridge, across the corridor and into the messhall. It was total chaos, bodies were strewn everywhere and their blood was splattered all over the place. Carson saw some Grunts shooting a fellow Marine and let loose on them, mowing most of them down with an entire clip. The survivors turned and began to lob grenades towards the Marines. Two of them stuck and then there were two powerful explosions and screams.

He cursed angrily, but lightened up as two Marines each threw a frag grenade towards the Covenant. The rest of the Grunts were wiped out in the blast and one of the Elites were as well. They were just

managing to wipe out the last of the Covenant when the doors at the other end of the room open and more of them began to pour in. Carson cursed, they were done for. Then he heard the door open behind him and Master Chief came into the room. He began to systematically wipe out all the Covenant in the room, blowing them away with the help of the Marines it was very quickly all over with.

The next ten minutes were spent searching the messhall for any Covenant survivors. His luck seemed to run out as he spotted a hidden Grunt. It had shoved itself under the table and managed to get off half a dozen rounds from its plasma pistol before Carson shot it in the face. He gritted his teeth against the pain as he felt that one of the plasma bolts had gotten through his chestplate armor. One of the Marines came over and examined him. David winced as the piece of metal was removed from his chest and the man above him sighed; apparently the damage was not too terribly bad.

"You'll live, Corporal. But right now we need to get the Hell off of this ship. Come on, let's get going."

2. Touchdown

****A/N:** Thank you to my readers for their kind reviews. I hope I can continue to improve this with the help of Obsidian13. Here are a few shoutouts:******

****NSATrooper:** I'm scrapping the sequel and starting over. I am completely out of ideas for it.******

****aznricechink54****:** Thanks for the review and I'll get around to yours when I canâ€|sorry. Lots o' work to do. ******

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter Two:****

****Touchdown****

****Music:** Points of Authority â€" Linkin Park******

****Halo theme****

Both men hoisted Carson into the air and headed toward the nearest lifepods as the Master Chief systematically annihilated every Covenant soldier in his path. They were as careful as possible when carrying the wounded Marine as they maneuvered down the blood soaked titanium corridors as the ship rocked and tumbled from continual blows from Covenant ships. They were finally able to locate a lifeboat with enough room for the Marines to get in and set Carson in a seat, strapping him in and doing the same themselves. With a quick warning, the small craft rocketed out of the bay it was held in, narrowly missing a blast of plasma fired at it. The one next to it, however, was not so lucky as it exploded in a brilliantly horrifying display of fire and metal.

Carson gulped audibly as he watched the other lifeboat disintegrate and his stomach sank. He heard a Marine to his left praying for the other people's souls and for their own safety. Sighing quietly, he looked over the corner of the pilot's seat and his eyes widened at

what he saw; a massive ring world, ten thousand kilometres wide and at least half that thick, its surface dotted with landmasses that looked oddly familiar to Earth, and oceans, accompanied by clouds and swirling hurricanes. "Dear God, what is that," he muttered.

As the rest of the men looked on, the pilot shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine," she said honestly, "But that's where we're headed. Hang on, atmospheric entry in five."

Instinctively, the Marine Corporal gripped the straps that held him to his seat and inhaled sharply, hoping that they could survive the inevitable crash. His chest still ached and complained from the plasma burns, but he was used to it by now. A person doesn't spend three years fighting the Covenant and not get wounded, after all.

Suddenly, flames erupted all around the small craft as it began its descent through the atmosphere and toward the surface. The steel fuselage began to heat up like an oven as the ground rushed up to meet them quickly—too quickly. The pilot flipped a switch on her left and the lifeboat lurched, slowing immensely. "Brace for impact," she shouted.

Carson's head snapped forward and then back, smashing into the bulkhead, giving him one Hell of a headache when they collided with the ground. Unconsciousness threatened to overtake him, but the twenty-six year old Marine fought back, barely managing to stay awake and unstrap, the surviving men and women following suit.

Only two people had died in the crash, both of their skulls being smashed in when they collided with the bulkhead. Neither of them wore their combat helmets. Carson attempted to stand, but his knees buckled and he braced himself against the fuselage. He then felt an arm close around his shoulder and another around his waist, helping him stand. When Carson looked down, he found the pilot smiling up at him. "Come on, we need to find some better cover than this tin can," she said softly.

He nodded and muttered in agreement, allowing her to help him outside and into the sunlight. The Marine's eyes swept over his surroundings, taking in everything; high canyon walls surrounded the small valley they were in, two tunnels connecting them to the rest of the ring. In front of him was a large, turquoise building, a spire reaching high from its base hundreds of feet into the air, spewing out bright blue beams of light every few seconds. To his left was a large hill dotted with trees and rocks; a perfect hiding place until evac arrived. "Okay," he called, "Listen up!"

The other Marines turned to him, questioning expressions on their faces. "The Covenant will be sending troops soon to check these lifeboats for survivors. We need to take cover until backup arrives. You two," he said, pointing to two younger men, "go set up emergency beacons at the entrances to this canyon. The rest of you gather everything useful that you can and we'll head up that hill and take cover there."

No one moved for a second, then something seemingly clicked and they got to work. Carson and the pilot made their way up the hill after she gathered some medical supplies and he grabbed a sniper rifle and several clips for it. She leaned him carefully against a rock and

began to work on his wounds. The other Marines followed close behind, hauling everything of use with them; MA5Bs and M9Ds, with clips of ammo for each of them. Carson hissed as the pilot sprayed some biofoam over the wound.

"Jesus, you never get used to that stuff," he said loudly. The pilot laughed as she replaced the chest plate to its former place.

"By the way," she said, "my name's Sally Collins."

"David Carson," he replied friendly.

Their introductions were cut off by the roar of a Warthog engine. Two stoic figures shot up the hill in the nimble vehicle, but something was amiss; both of them were SPARTAN II's. "Wow," called one Marine, "a Mark-V!"

The Warthog slid to a stop at the top of the hill, scattering small rocks and dirt as the heavy tires carved up the soft earth. The SPARTAN in the driver's seat hopped out and headed towards Carson, who recognized him immediately; it was the Master Chief. Sally stood and headed over to the one-ton warrior. "You're a sight for sore eyes, Chief. We're in a bad way, we've got wounded here," she said, motioning toward David over her shoulder.

Stoic in his MJOLNIR armor, the Master Chief walked to Carson and knelt next to him. "Good to see you, sir," the wounded Marine said weakly. The Chief nodded and looked him over.

"You going to be okay, Marine," he asked in his deep, gravelly voice.

Carson nodded slowly and smiled. "I've been shot up worse than this, sir. You don't have to worry about me."

Master Chief nodded, stood and began to walk off when Carson called out to him. "Sir, take this sniper rifle," he said, hefting the heavy weapon and tossing it up to the SPARTAN. Once again, Chief nodded wordlessly and headed over to the Warthog to converse with the other Spartan, who was clad in blue armor with a Sergeant emblem emblazoned into the bicep in gold. Suddenly, the whine of a Covenant drop ship could be heard over head and Carson reached called out to another Marine. "Hey! Hand me a sniper rifle! I'm gonna need it!"

The man nodded and rummaged through a weapons pile, extracting a sniper rifle and several clips for it, then proceeded to hand them to Carson as Chief and the other Spartan opened up on the Covenant that jumped out of the drop ship. Not wanting to miss out, Carson rolled onto his stomach and set up the bipod of the sniper rifle and then gazed down the scope. He centered the cross hairs on an Elite's head, then moved it ahead of the creature about a meter and squeezed the trigger. The bullet exploded from the barrel and shot through the air, striking the Elite's head, causing its cranium to explode in a mass of blood and brains and the rest of its body to do a cartwheel. He repeated the process on a trio of Grunts, then reloaded.

"More Covenant coming from the left," a Marine cried. Carson grabbed the rifle and rolled again, setting the rifle on the bipod and staring down the scope. A Jackal was hiding behind a rock and its shield with only a section of its torso exposed. 'Mistake number

two,' thought Carson as he squeezed the trigger and watched the creature as it was ripped in half by the sheer velocity of the round tearing into it's body. He then found another Elite, a red one this time, and focused his sights on its head, pulling the trigger and smiling as its head exploded. The Marine then heard footsteps behind him, followed by an angry roar. He turned and came face-to-ankle with one very angry Elite. It raised its weapon and prepared to deliver a devastating blow when it just collapsed. Master Chief was standing behind it, the butt of his MA5B coated in purple blood. "Thank you sir."

"That makes us even," the supersoldier said calmly.

Smiling, Carson looked back down the scope of his rifle and continued picking off Covenant forces as they came. The battle went on for a good twenty minutes before the enemy was driven off and it was safe for Echo-419 to come and pick them up. The familiar whine of Pelican engines sounded as the sleek silver ship maneuvered over the canyon and landed near the crashed life boat. Sally and another Marine helped David over to the Warthog and carefully set him in, Sally clambering in afterward and sitting down in his lap, claiming to make sure he was okay. The other Marine only smiled and nodded, walking down the hill as the Chief steered the Warthog toward the Pelican, being as careful as he could to make the ride as smooth as possible.

'Finally,' thought Carson, 'maybe I'll be able to get some restâ€|'

****A/N**:** ****There's the end of chapter two. Sorry for the delay, but I've been busy on Xbox Liveâ€|and with school. That too. Anyway, just add Sgt Carson to your friends list on there (send me a message with your pen name so I know who you are). Until next update, review!****

3. Down Time

****A/N:** Guess who's back, back, back, back again, gain, gainâ€|ahem I'm back! Thank you to everyone for their re-â€|waitâ€|only two reviews? Both from Aphotica? I wonder where everyone wentâ€|ah well. Anyway, review please! I need motivation to keep going! By the way, read Through the Eyes of Another, the fiction that inspired me to write Charlie Company. You MUST check out Owen Frost: Warrior, written by Aphotica. It is an amazing story that has everything a good story should have! On with the show!**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter Three****

****Down Time****

Dust stirred and whirled around as the powerful Pelican engines powered up and it headed skyward. The young Marine Corporal had seen a lot in his short three years of fighting the Covenant, more than he'd like, and now lived only to seek revenge for the millions of innocents that had been slaughtered in this Hellish war and for his fallen comrades. Now, though, he had a new reason to fight; the destruction of Reach and the death, he assumed, of his twin brother,

Michael. Carson looked around at the other Marines in the cabin of the Pelicans and observed their faces and conditions. Most were battered and bruised, some bleeding and burned, others just cut from their rough landings. Amazingly enough, Sally remained practically unscathed, save for a small cut on her forehead.

David hadn't time before to get a good look at the lifeboat pilot yet, and decided this would be his chance. She was a slender young woman, beautiful too. Long, flowing red hair, emerald green eyes, full ruby-red lips—and then he noticed something else about the young woman; she was staring at him. Carson could feel her eyes penetrating his soul, his own giving away what he was truly feeling inside; anger, hate, resent, regret, sorrow, sadness, remorse, depression—everything negative that one could possibly feel at the same time. "Are you okay there, David," she whispered softly. That was something else remarkable about this woman—her voice was silky smooth, completely opposite of David's cold, emotionless voice.

"I'll be okay—you get some sleep. Believe me, those damned medics'll knock me out good."

She giggled softly, then rested her head on his shoulder and clenched a small hand on his forearm. David smiled warmly and then looked around at the other Marines—who were all staring at him and smiling. He could've sworn the Chief and blue Spartan were too. He blinked several times before the answer finally dawned on him. "What are you all staring at?"

One of them, a Sergeant judging from his uniform, spoke first. "Corporal, I don't know what the hell you did, but it worked. Keep it up, son, and she'll be yours, I can see it."

Smiling, Carson looked down at Sally, who was still sleeping peacefully on David's shoulder, apparently not hearing any of the conversation Carson and the Sergeant just had. He chuckled softly as he thought about what the other man said and wondered what the future beheld for him—but he'd have to think of that later. For now, all he could focus on was survival and a way to escape the ring.

Thoughts rushed through his head as he watched the ground scream by under the Pelican. Everything from how he'd escape the ring, to Sally, to whatever else he could think of. Truth be told, part of David was bored with just sitting around, and another part of him was the opposite. The young Marine had developed several personalities over the course of the war, due mainly to the psychological stress of 'kill or be killed' situations constantly occurring. While this sort of thing didn't always happen, no one knew why Carson had these personalities—battles were a guess, and they really didn't know what triggered each one.

Yet, David lived and fought on for vengeance and to protect everyone else he knew. That was the reason he had joined the Marine Corps at the age of eighteen, as soon as he was old enough. Carson had a knack for combat, as some said, and was an excellent rifleman, winning three medals in basic for his marksmanship. He was also the type of person willing to give life and limb to save someone else, even if he didn't know 'em. 'Simper Fi,' he thought proudly. "Simper Fi—he then mumbled, causing the other men in the aft to look up,

smiling.

Simper Fi is short for the Marine Corps' slogan; Simper Fidelis meaning 'Forever Faithful' in either Latin or Greek he couldn't exactly remember, but it didn't matter. What did matter was that he took that saying to heart when he joined the Corps and wasn't about to forget or neglect it. As Carson looked up, he noticed the other Marines were smiling, and he smiled back. "Simper Fi," he called out to them.

"Ahoo-Rah," they replied, followed by laughter and talking.

"_Heads up Marines,_" the drop ship pilot called, "_we're coming up on echo base. Carson, get up to the cabin. There's someone that needs to speak with you_."

David stood up, his chest protesting the action harshly, and inhaled sharply. Pushing the pain aside, he headed toward the cockpit and slid the heavy iron door open. After stepping inside, he shut the door behind him. "yes sir, I've notified- ah he's here," the pilot said and handed the mike Carson.

"Corporal David Carson here," he said non-emphatically, waiting for a reply. It came in the voice of 1st Lt Anderson, Captain Keyes' backup in case something happen which, obviously, it had.

"Carson, we've got a mission for you. Captain Keyes has been captured by Covenant forces. After looking through your record, we believe you're a good choice for this mission. You'll be working with three Spartans," the 1st Lt said with disgust, "and eight or nine Marines, depending on who we can find. You've got 24 hours to get ready."

The mic clicked off and the young Marine handed it back to the pilot with a sigh. "I'm sorry, Corporal," the pilot noted sadly. He then noticed blood on the mike. "You're injured!"

David looked down and noticed that the chest wound had begun bleeding again and stumbled back through the doorway and to a medical kit. Everyone had heard the pilot and rushed over to aid their comrade, first by catching him before he collapsed and then by setting him on his back.

"Damn," commented one Private, "Sarge, you seein this? The guy's a damned battlefield!"

The Sergeant nodded and began to replace the old gauze that was now stained and caked in dried blood. Plasma was supposed to cauterize a wound when it hit someone, but, for some reason, this guy was bleeding his guts out. "Cortana," the Chief suddenly growled, "what's this guy's status?"

"Scanning," the AI replied, "There's something wrong with his circulatory system, Chief. Either that, or something right with it. The young Corporal here has developed some sort of resistance to Covenant weaponry, or he'd be long dead from poisoning."

The Marines and Spartans in the aft of the drop ship were jostled around roughly as the wheels of the Pelican slammed into the ground rather roughly and the landing plank lowered with a creak and a _clang_. Several Medics rushed the rear of the ship to aid Carson,

pushing many other people out of the way. They loaded the wounded Marine out on a stretcher and rushed him across the landing platforms and into Sick Bay. Many of the soldiers that were in the Pelican, including the pilot and co-pilot, followed close behind until they were ushered away and into the mess hall by other medics.

The next few hours passed uneventfully, most of it spent in the Mess Hall picking at the slime the UNSC dared call food, waiting for any news of Carson's condition. Finally, at 1955 Zulu, six hours after they had arrived, a medic found them. "Your friend is lucky. He'll survive, but right now he's in a comatose state. We're not sure how long it could be before he wakes up, or if he wakes up at all."

In Sick Bay, as the medic explained David's condition, he was tossing in his sleep at the images that flashed through his inner mind. Pictures of horrid, pustules of creatures wiggled and bounced and skipped toward their prey—humans—it was in a large, cavernous room about forty meters high and half that wide—screams echoed in that chamber, screams of pain and suffering. Then, all went black and a deep, rumbling voice occupied his mind. "The Flood will consume all," it bellowed, "there is no escape."

The Flood? What the Hell were they? What was going on? Then, the sentence reverberated through his mind, shattering all hope like a mighty sledge hammer slung by a giant at a thin sheet of glass. Despair began to overtake the young Marine as the voice repeated the same sentence over and over—"The Flood will consume all, there is no escape."

Now scared and disturbed, he desperately wanted to escape this hellish nightmare, wake up and forget everything. Something was not right on this ring. A presence lurked beneath the surface, dark and sinister, a presence like nothing Humans or Covenant had ever even imagined to exist—they were about to release a creature that they could not fight and win against. Then, a bright flash filled his mind and the despair was lifted. At first it was so bright, David could not open his eyes, but as it dimmed, he did so and they widened to the size of saucers.

There in front of him stood a trio of beings, wrapped in cloaks of all colors and varieties. The robes extended to the figures' feet and great hoods lined with ornaments and laced with gold covered their faces in shadow. They spoke in unison, their voices melding into one, melodious tone that seemed to be made of the finest silk. "Do not fear, David Carson, for we are not here to harm you."

"Wh—who the hell are you? How do you know me," he shouted.

"That is not of your concern, David Carson, not yet. A great destiny lies ahead of you, far in the future, in the final battle against the Flood. We cannot tell you when or where this will occur, for it will lead to your destruction. We can, however, leave you with this wisdom. Take it to heart, for there can be nothing more true. Evil cannot exist without Good, just as Good must coincide as evil. We must leave you now, David Carson, and you must rest. Many great battles lie ahead of you, and you will need all the strength you can muster."

Just as they came, the figures left, in a blinding flash of light. David lay there, pondering upon their words in his sleep. What they

told him made little sense, but he supposed that he would have to decipher their code as he went. Things were becoming interesting already, and Carson was sure that they would become more so as time continued on.

****A/N: DONE! FINALLY! I apologize for taking so long to update, but school and other things have been a pain. I hope to hear your reviews and any guesses as to who these strange beings are. Until next time, peace out! Also, I'd like to let you all know that Aphotica will not continue to write until May 2005 due to low self-esteem and a lack of ideas. Please let him know what you think of his works. Thanks!****

4. Getting Ready to Rock and Roll

****A/N: Wowâ€¦two reviews (one by E-Mail)â€¦it's better than nothing, I guess. Here's a response to one of my readers:****

****Agent Squishy: First, it's spelled _Pillar of Autumn_. Secondly, if you've ever read _The Spartan Chronicles_ (which is being rewritten) Mike and Trey are Spartans that escaped Reach. They're integral to the story line.****

****Madman Mac: I appreciate your comment and I'll keep em in mind, 'mano.****

****Warning: Minor mush scene here. If you don't like the romantic stuffâ€¦well, TS.****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter Four:****

****Getting Ready to Roll****

David awoke around an hour later, sweating profusely and utterly confused and befuddled. What was that dream about? It still scared him, the eerily grave voice still repeating that same phrase in his mind over and over, but now slowly fading. He still had that wary feeling about the ringworld, and it grew stronger as the voice grew weakerâ€¦something was going to happenâ€¦and it was going to happen soon, with massive repercussions. However, he had other things to deal with at the moment, which included a suicide mission on a Covenant battleship.

He stretched lazily and yawned, twisting and popping his back, scratching his chinâ€¦the normal routine for a person that just woke up. A pair of medics checked him over carefully before releasing him from sick bay to go about his business. David marched down the narrow, turquoise corridors and eyed the Grunts and other Covenant there that were scrubbing the walls and floor. Some gave him odd looks, while others continued about his business. One Elite recognized him and called out, "Human! You were the one Kizkip wounded upon the vessel, correct?"

Kizkip? That must've been the name of the Grunt that shot him in the chest. How did this Elite know about it? 'Well, they must be able to talk about victories after all,' thought Carson, 'like us.' "Yeah, what of it?"

The Elite nodded and clicked his lower mandibles as a sign of a chuckle. "So, you are the one after allâ€|well, Human, I should hope you survive."

Now puzzled even further, he Carson wandered down the corridors and into the armory, where he met many of the men that were riding in the Pelican with him. Their faces brightened considerably when they saw him enter. "Hey, Sahge! 'e's alive!" said an Australian Marine as he glanced at the door.

Several people smiled and stood, slapping the young Marine on the back, laughing, talking and joking with him now. Then, however, a silent hush fell over the room as a trio of armor-plated behemoths entered the room and everyone sank back a little. One of them was in jet-black armor, which was missing paint in some places and the titanium could be seen underneath in patches. The second was in royal blue armor in around the same condition, if not somewhat better, than the first one's and they both had the bright yellow Sergeant symbol emblazoned in their bicep plates. Then, in the center of them, was the most famous Spartan of them all: Master Chief.

The Sergeant Bradley, the man that commented to Carson in the Pelican, stood up and snapped to attention, followed by the other Marines. "Are all of you ready?" asked the Master Chief as he looked them over, stopping on David.

"Yes sir, every one of us. Don't worry about the Corporal over there, he's fine. Marines! Move out!"

The exited the room in single file, the Spartans last, and headed down to the hangar bay, Marines and Medics wishing them luck along the way. When they arrived at the hangar, which had a spectacular view of the hills surrounding Alpha Base, they found Sally waiting for them. She was bleary eyed and had a worried expression chiseled on her face. Obviously, she'd been worried about David when he was in the mini-coma, but now she was sick with it. He told the other Marines to go ahead to the Pelican and that he'd catch up. "Sally," he began while walking toward her, "is something wrong? You don't look too good."

"David," she managed to choke out through the lump in her throat, "promise me you'll come back. In one piece."

Smiling, he hugged the young woman, let go and headed toward the Pelican, setting a hand on the ramp and launching himself in. Then, David looked back at her, winked and gave a thumbs' up. "You have yourself a promise.:

He could see the young lady smiling as the Pelican rose and shot off of the platforms and out over the rolling green hills. The Sergeant was giving a briefing, but Carson already knew the gist of the mission due to the Lt's explanation of the situation. He stood and headed over to the back of the Pelican, leaning against the bulkhead and closing his eyes, praying silently that no more dreams would come to plague him like those that had before.

As he drifted off to sleep, darkness cameâ€|followed by an intense bright light, identical to the one that occurred earlier. There in front of him again were three tall beings, cloaked in robes of

vibrant colors and jems. "Who are you? Why do you keep coming to me like this?"

The middle figure took two steps forward and reached a hand toward David. "This is the only form we can communicate with you in, David Carson. We are the Forerunner, creators of these mighty rings that you now reside on. As for our history, that is for another time, but know this; you are all in great danger. And not just from the Covenant. The Flood lurk below the surface of Halo and must not be released. If they are, we fear it may be the end of all sentient life in the universe. The Reclaimer will not be able to stop the Flood on his own, David Carson."

They conversed for what seemed like an eternity before Carson awoke. He was resting in a bit of an awkward position and his neck was slightly sore. Night had fallen around the rocky wasteland that the Pelican was flying over and the engines made relatively no noise. He managed to hear the end of a sentence Cortana was saying how they were to get aboard the Covenant ship.

"Well how are we supposed to board this thing if it's in the air? The Corps issued me a rifle, not wings!" one Marine commented.

David sat up from where he was and looked at his fellow soldier. "There's a gravity lift that transports troops and supplies to the surface. That's our ticket in."

****A/N: BAHAAHAHAHAHAHAHA! FINISHED! Remember, as always, read and review!****

5. The Truth and Reconciliation: Part One

****A/N: Well, Psychotic Marine here once again. Thank you, my reviewers.****

****Warrior: Well, the guy that said that was always white in my game, so I figured this would be best.****

****Spacefan: If you read the books, the Humans took prisoners after they captured Alpha Base, so that explains the Covenant cleaning the halls.****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter 5****

****_The Truth and Reconciliation_ ****

****Part I****

The Pelican dropped down and its ramp lowered with a dull _clang_ as the troops prepared to depart from the large drop ship. David was the last out and on the ground, immediately flipping on his flashlight and surveying the surrounding area as the Pelican lifted off. They were located in the middle of what appeared to be a canyon littered with rocks and the occasional tree or two. About thirty meters in front of him was a small path that led up at a slight incline. He turned to the Sergeant and sat down as the drop ship lifted off and disappeared into the night, the sound of the powerful engines now

inaudible. The Marines fanned out and secured the immediate area and listened as Cortana gave her orders.

"Marines, hold up here while the Master Chief covertly eliminates the Covenant around the corner. Don't advance until the Covenant return fire on us."

Each marine, gloomily illuminated by the soft glow of their rifle-mounted flashlights, nodded and muttered in turn as they sat down or stayed standing in small groups. David stretched and stifled a yawn as he glanced around the rocky cliffs where they'd landed. Chief had gone around a small ridge about thirty meters ahead (the sound of which was confirmed by the shrill snap of a sniper rifle) around a small rock that was sitting next to a small, disheveled tree that seemed similar to the trees once seen on the great plains of Africa—albeit much smaller.

The cliffs around them were high, maybe half a mile or more, and littered with rocks and crags. The sky was a bit odd looking, what with the other half of the giant ring clearly visible in the night sky. That and a small orange planet loomed overhead—or maybe below? Well, at the moment, it didn't matter. Truthfully, David was still pondering upon his dreams, trying to figure out just exactly what the Forerunner were trying to tell him. They'd leave clues—but no definite answer was in sight.

Chief had disappeared around a corner some time ago, and no one had heard any shots fired—yet. Many of the young soldiers were jumpy, often glancing around from wall to wall, as if expecting a Covenant ambush, but considering that the enemy probably didn't know that they were here, the chances of that were none-to-zero. David sighed and rubbed his temples in annoyance as a headache formed from the sheer amount of stress and confusion he'd been enduring recently. The Forerunner, or whatever the hell they were, were an interesting bunch—though he'd only 'met' three. They seemed to be kind and extremely knowledgeable of the Halos—of course, they had built them, so that was to be expected.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, shots were heard, echoing through the canyons and resonating there for a few moments. Not long after that, the sounds of plasma fire rang across, and the Marines took their cue. They stood in staggered formation so that one grenade would not wipe them all out and charged around the cliff wall. A pair of Grunts turned and fired at the Marines, shots flying wildly around them, splashing harmlessly against the rocky walls. David and another man raised their rifles and gently tapped the triggers, not wanting to waste too much ammo on Grunts, preferring instead to save the bulk of it for Elites or Jackals. The tiny creatures fell quickly with a pair of squeals and a shower of neon blue blood.

More shots cracked from the Master Chief's sniper rifle, and the Covenant's ranks were diminishing quickly. An Elite appeared from around the corner with an enraged battle cry, bringing its Plasma Rifle down on a Marine's shoulder like a savage club. It prepared to strike again when dozens of MA5B rounds slammed into its chest, causing it to stumble backward. David watched as another Marine went in to rescue his fallen comrade as the others kept pouring hot lead into the creature, causing it to fall back and back as its shields failed. David's clip ran dry as the Elite's shields collapsed, leaving it temporarily vulnerable. He unsheathed the standard combat

knife hanging from his waist as the Elite moved upon his fellow soldiers, charged forward and jammed it into the creature's chest, yanking it upward and then away, leaving the Elite to collapse in a puddle of its own blood.

He helped the pair to their feet and checked the wounded man for injuries, finding only a badly bruised shoulder. They caught up with the rest of the team, who were gathered around a shade turret past the rocky outcropping David and the other two were at and near a cliff edge that overlooked a giant desert. The Sarge nodded as they approached and everyone checked their rifles and such as David wiped the blood off of his knife. That was where he belonged, in the heat of battle, killing the enemy before the enemy killed him.

The eight men and Spartan made their way up the short ledge that led upward for twenty meters to another small canyon, this one littered with Covenant and Shade turrets. One such turret was directly above where the Marines waited, whose gunner's head was obliterated by the Master Chief's sniper. Cortana gave orders for the Marines to wait until the Chief was in position to advance, and the Marines obliged and watched as Spartan-117 leapt onto a rock and decapitated some poor Elite patrolling a ledge thirty meters ahead of them. A pair of Jackals rounded the corner past that, and the Chief made quick work of disposing them too. He inched his way up the cliff and disappeared from sight, but not sound as the deafening crack crack crack of his sniper was still clearly audible. Orders came suddenly. "Marines, move up on the left; the Chief and I will take the middle."

Rallying once again, the Marines charged around the far corner in a large group, their formation constricted by the massive lack of room. David ripped a grenade from his bandolier, primed it, and threw it with all his might into a mob of Jackals that were being led by an Elite. The grenade flew true, landing in the center of the mob, and detonated, coating the surrounding radius in a thick layer of blood and gore. The Elite stumbled momentarily as the grenade knocked it off balance and blew out its shields, then regained its composure, only to be ripped apart from a barrage of bullets. They went up a small ledge and came across the remains of a lower special operations Elite, noted by the sky blue color of its armor. Most of its head was missing, probably due to the sniper rifle, and the body lay crumpled in a cruel manner; a definite sign that the Chief had been here.

The Marines caught up with Chief at the entrance to a small tunnel-like canyon that led upward slightly, with two or three curves in there. Two Grunts and an Elite, all cleanly decapitated, lay at his feet. The Spartan nodded as the Marines caught up to him and started up the trench, marines close behind. David carefully observed everything around him as the Chief took out two or three Elites ahead and came to the mouth of the trench. "We did it!" exclaimed one Marine, "We made it!"

"The fight's just beginning—we'll be torn apart by those Shades, Chief." David replied.

As if in response, Chief raised the SR2-AM rifle and set his sights on the gunner of a shade turret and, with one clean shot, decapitated it. The Marines charged up the small ledge just to the right of where the gun was situated and scattered as three others opened fire. David cursed as he watched a pair of Marines ripped to shreds, their flesh

sizzling and bubbling as more splashed against them. Some of it suddenly stopped as the Chief opened up again, giving Carson a chance to make a dash at the next gun, situated near a rather large drop off behind a rock. He ripped a grenade from his bandolier and hurtled it at the Shade, then dove out of the way as another barrage whizzed past him. The resulting explosion was relaxing, as was the squeal of a Grunt as it was thrown from the firing chair and over the cliff.

Suddenly, several Marines cursed over the comms as not only a drop ship roared in, but more troops were arriving from the Truth and Reconciliation via the gravity lift. Carson leapt over a small drop directly in front of the rock ahead of him and made a mad dash to the right, where the corpses of two Marines and ammunition were located. He relieved one man of a sniper and its ammo, then took several grenades and three clips for his MA2B Assault Rifle, for which he now had nine clips. An Elite on the gravity lift spotted the lone Marine and roared as it charged him, firing wildly as David took cover behind a Covenant supply crate. It stopped as the Plasma Rifle overheated, and David emerged, priming a plasma grenade he had taken off a Grunt earlier and stuck it to the creature's face, watching it desperately try to claw the thing off. It exploded with a crash, flinging the smoldering corpse over the lift and detonating the rest of the Elites grenades, which blew several Grunts and Jackals apart, coating the gravity lift in an even thicker layer of blood.

Ten minutes and three waves later, the Marines were just beginning to relax. Three of them, including Carson, were left. They were going about collecting the ammo and dog tags of the dead Marines, then sat down at the edge of the lift, awaiting orders from Chief. Yet, for some reason, David still felt that somethingâ€|bigger was about to come. He wished at that very moment he was wrong.

A pair of Hunters, the most feared warriors the Covenant armies had to throw at the Human Marines. They roared and charged the men, firing their fuel rod cannons, forcing the trio to duck in cover as the Chief engaged them. David had just hit the ground and stood, only to see that one of the Hunters was charging him, preparing to bring its shield down on the young marine's headâ€|a grisly fate that Carson intended to avoid. He rolled to the side as the Hunter slammed its shield down, raised his pistol and fired several rounds hastily at the Hunter's exposed back, several of which pinged off the thick armor. Two rounds, however, found their mark squarely in the fleshy orange spot on the Hunter's back, causing it to writhe and screech in pain as it fell to the ground.

David looked up from the corpse to the others in time to see the other Hunter collapse from the Master Chief's sniper. He also noticed that he was the last Marine standing, for the Sarge had a rather large hole burned in his torso, presumably from a fuel rod blast, and the other man had one hole in each lung, not to mention that his chest cavity was caved in. David stood, dusted himself off, and headed over to the Chief, who nodded as another Pelican came in, this one dropping off three Marines and twoâ€|Spartans?

****A/N:** Sorry this took so longâ€|writer's block. Heh heh. Not to mention that 90 through this, I went through the game to find I left a section out. Oops. R&R! Until next time!**

6. The Truth and Reconciliation: Part Two

****A/N:** Well, here we are again. Okay, just so you know, the _Truth and Reconciliation_ will be divided into three parts. Insertion, assault, extraction. Now for the shoutouts.**

****Warp Lugia Obscura:** Thanks for the review! Most people'd be like "There was only one Spartan!", but I like to bend the rules.**

****Warrior:** Ah, the ever present reviewer strikes again! I'm glad you're enjoying the story.**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter 6:****

****The _Truth and Reconciliation_****

****Part II****

****Assault****

David sighed as he gathered the ammunition and grenades he could from the corpses of his fallen comrades, watching as the three Spartans conversed and the other Marines stood around, looking confused. Some even spoke of going back to Alpha Base, of not being needed here on this suicide mission because of the Spartans. Carson, however, knew better. The Spartans were super soldiers, that was plainly obvious, be even _they_ were still human. They'd need all the help they could get, and David planned on following them to the ends of the earth. Halo, if need be.

He approached the Spartans casually as they stood next to the gravity lift, talking quietly (on private channels no doubt). David stopped and stood still as one of them took notice, but not out of fear of the Spartans. He stood at attention from respect for them. "Sirs, I've got all the equipment and ammunition I need. I'm ready to help you rescue the Captain."

One of the Spartans, in metallic grey with the emblem of Sergeant Major emblazoned into his bicep, looked to his other Spartans, then shrugged. "Marine," he began slowly, "we can probably handle this ourselves. There's no need to go and get yourself killed."

"Sir, I've fought alongside Spartans on several occasions, and was damn proud to do it. I'm not gonna pass up another opportunity to do so."

The Spartan that spoke looked back to his comrades and shrugged, waiting for an answer. Master Chief's fingers twitched slightly, barely visible to someone without enhanced vision or who wasn't looking, and the other two Spartans glanced at each other. The blue one's finger twitched as well, and the first turned back to Carson and nodded silently.

David snapped off a crisp salute and stepped onto the gravity lift and turned to face his fellow Marines who, after a brief hesitation, followed behind him and stepped on the platform. He suppressed a smile as the Spartans came up with the Marines and the lift

activated. It was an odd feeling, sort of like going over a hill really fast in a car. His stomach felt like it rose a little bit and he looked down as the ground became farther away. The gravity lift's base became a black spot on the ground, and the bodies were no longer visible, only the canyon and starsâ€¦David silently hoped none of the Marines were acrophobic.

Finally, in a flash, he felt something solid beneath his feet; the durable alloy of a Covenant warship. He checked his surroundings as he waited on the others; the room was dim and littered with Covenant supply crates and the occasional Wraith or two. On the far side of the room were two blast doors, and on either side of him were two pairs of normal sensor doors. The ceiling was only about thirty feet or so, and the room itself was fifteen feet wide and twenty feet long at the most.

The others arrived soon and everyone fanned out to secure the area, carefully watching the doors for threats. After a few short, antagonizing moments, Cortana finally spoke up, breaking the eerie silence. "No Covenant defenses detectedâ€¦" she said in an almost confused tone of voice.

"There's no Covenant hereâ€¦looks like nobody's home." Said one Marine,

The other Marines relaxed, but David stayed on full alert. He'd boarded a cruiser or two in his time and knew that something was definitely wrong here. The Covenant should be attacking them with full force, but the hangar remained empty and eerily quiet, which was another thing that bothered him; where were the sounds of machinery running, systems humming as they went about their programmed tasks? Yet, still, there was nothingâ€¦until the subtle whistle of a door activating broke the silence.

David immediately whipped around to face the door, and was stupefied for a moment; a Covenant plasma blade was hanging in midair. However, he knew that where there was a plasma sword, there was an Elite. He opened fire on the phantom blade and was relieved to see an Elite flicker into viewâ€¦and appalled at the same time as the Elite roared in anger and charged at him, swinging the blade in a wild attempt to cleanly remove Corporal Carson's head from his shoulders. David ducked under the blade, narrowly avoiding it by mere millimeters, and the others opened fire, quickly subduing the creature.

"No Covenant!" David shouted, "You just had to open your mouth!"

The Marine that had spoken, now wide eyed and extremely frightened, only shrugged in response, as if he had no part in what just happened. David sighed and stood and checked his armor; a small section of his helmet was missing, probably from the near miss with the plasma sword. So far, that was twice Carson had gotten lucky with a plasma swordâ€¦well, twice in the same three day period, that is. First on Reach, now hereâ€¦his luck had to run out eventually, and David hoped that it would not be all too soon.

Then, out of the calm, another door opened with a shrill whistle, but behind it wasâ€¦nothing. Carson, not wanting to take any chances, primed a grenade and lobbed it at the open door. Not long after, the explosion resounded through the quiet hangar rather loudlyâ€¦then, he

held his breath, praying that he had not just wasted a grenade. Finally, when the smoke cleared, the mangled body of a golden Elite, sword clutched in its hand, could be seen just outside the doorway, fresh blood still pumping from its veins. As David relaxed, another door openedâ€|and anotherâ€|and anotherâ€|and anotherâ€|Covenant troops were pouring into the room in a seemingly endless tide of death and destruction. Though they were mostly Grunts and Jackals, the occasional cloaked Elite would be thrown in there, just to throw the humans off balance.

David opened up with his MA5B in suit of the other Marines, pouring every ounce of lead he had with him into Humanity's greatest foes. A pair of Grunts squealed as the bullets ripped them apart, followed by a Jackal screaming as a grenade thrown by another Marine blew it apart. As soon as the left side of the hangar was cleared out, the right flood gates opened up and another dozen Covenant troops came through, only to be fired upon immediately. Carson fired upon these as well and ran out of ammo just as another cloaked Elite came through the doorway, plasma blade in hand. It charged David immediately, who unslung the sniper rifle from his shoulder and dropped to one knee, aimed down the scope, placed the crosshair on the Elite's head and squeezed the trigger.

With amazing speed, the Elite ducked out of the bullet's passed and it slammed into the opposite wall harmlessly. With one clean swipe, it cleaved the barrel of the sniper rifle in half and kept swinging at the Marine, who ducked out of the way just in time as he backed up. Overwhelming fear clutched at David's heart as the creature closed in on him, each swing of the blade missing by a smaller margin every time. Abruptly, Carson felt something solid impeding his path; he had backed into a wall. David closed his eyes and awaited his death, but it never came. The sounds of assault rifles echoed through the room, then stopped and a soft 'thud' resounded shortly afterward. He opened his eyes slowly and found the smoldering (and holey) body of the Elite laying at his feet, two of the Spartans standing not too far away.

"You alright, Marine?" one called.

Still in a very acute stage of shock, David could only nod in reply. He was still shaking from the combination of adrenaline and fear, the latter of which still gripped at his heart, threatening to squeeze it to a complete stop. David pushed himself off of the wall and tenderly stepped forward over the fallen Covenant trooper's body. One step at a time, he told himself, just one step at a time, as if just to make sure everything was real and he was really alive. After thirty seconds or so of this tedious pace, he regained his nerves and began to walk regularly, marching over to the rest of the squad.

Before anyone had a chance to say anything to him, a set of heavy blast doors on the eastern side of the hangar opened, revealing some of the hardest-fighting units of the Covenant armies; Hunters. At twelve feet tall standing straight up, the compressed their size down to cover their weak spots in the front, but that left the one in the back open. The only problem was getting behind a Hunter in order to hit that weak spot, which was in the exact center of the spine and about a foot wide all the way around; not an easy target for the average Marine.

David's eyes widened as he watched the green glow of the Hunters'

fuel rod cannons begin to appear and become more intense. "Duck in cover!" he shouted at the top of his lungs as the cannons charged. He leapt to the right, landed on his shoulder, and rolled across the ground as one of the superheated, radioactive rounds screamed across the room and impacted on a supply crate, causing it to burst into flame and igniting the dozens of grenades stored inside, which ripped up whatever the floor was made of.

The Spartans immediately leapt into action and sprinted forward, headlong into the hunters. The first, 008, slid under an attempted strike by the closest Hunter and rolled to avoid another. He leapt to his feet and jumped back as the second took a swipe at him in order to aid his bond brother. By this time, 009 was in position, crouched near a Wraith tank that was parked in the hangar, pistol raised and ready. He fired a trio of shots, two of which pierced one hunter's soft spot. By the time the second had whirled around to see it's brother's death, Master Chief had worked over behind it and fired a sniper round into it's spine, cleanly splitting the nerve hub. Both Hunters collapsed with a rather loud 'clang', one on top of the other. From the entrance into the ship, the Marines had had one casualty, which David counted as sheer luck. Were it not for Spartans, they would have all been killed.

David stood slowly, his bones and muscles complaining about all of the abuse they'd been put through, and made his way over to the large doors that the Hunters had come through and motioned for the Marines to follow him. Directly to his left was a ramp that sloped down for about twenty meters, then leveled out. Aside from the door at the bottom, there was really nothing of interest in here. Nonetheless, David slowly crept down the ramp in a crouched position and whipped to the right as soon as he got to the bottom. There was another blast door in front of him, this one firmly locked. David tinkered with the lock mechanism for a moment before sighing and turning around.

The Marines and three Spartans were waiting behind him for any news. "It's no good, Chief. I can't bypass it."

"Well, what about those service panels the Covenant had come from?"

Carson shook his head. "We'd all be sitting ducks in that narrow space. We'll wait here while you go around and open the door from the other side, Chief."

Before Carson could even finish the sentence, Chief was gone, leaving the three Marines and other two Spartans alone next to the large door. Some of the Marines shifted uncomfortably under the two super soldiers' gaze, and a couple even had apprehensive looks plastered across their features. David, however, looked upon the Spartans with the utmost respect and pity. First of all, most Marines didn't know that the Spartans didn't volunteer to become what they were—the UNSC and ONI took them from their homes and families and turned them into what they were. He had also fought beside Spartans on Reach and clearly understood that they were superior to the average marine, freaks or not.

The group stood there in silence and was startled by shouts and gunfire on the other side of the thick door. Several indentions were made in it by grenade fragments and stray bullets, which, quite frankly, scared a Marine that was standing too close to the door.

Just as quickly as it began, the battle ceased and the sounds of heavy boots clicking echoed in the room beyond. With a hiss, the door opened and revealed Master Chief on the other side. Behind him was a scene of utter chaos; bodies lay strewn across the floor and many colors of blood mixed together in sticky flowing rivers. The room was littered with all sorts of Covenant supplies and vehicles; two Wraiths, a Ghost, three crates of plasma grenades that had been turned over and spilled open during the battle, another crate that was stuffed full of Plasma Rifles.

However, there was one thing that caught David's eye; there, in the middle of the room, was a plasma blade. The most powerful hand-held weapon the Covenant armies possessed, it was more of a symbol than a tool for killing. However, several high-ranking Elites had been seen wielding these insanely powerful weapons on the battle field, and even the mighty Spartans didn't stand a chance against them. Carefully, as if fearing that it might explode, Carson reached down and grabbed the hilt of the weapon which, oddly enough, fit perfectly in his hand.

The weapon's hilt was beautiful. Some sort of inscription had been carved into it, probably by hand, in the language of the Covenant. Several brightly colored gems twinkled in the fluorescent light that the room gave off. The hilt itself was cylindrical with a small rise in the middle, which fit snugly in between David's middle finger and ring finger. Making sure it was faced away from him, Carson depressed the trigger and the blade ignited with a nearly blinding flash. Satisfied that it wouldn't explode, David attached the blade to his belt and regrouped with the rest of the marines and Spartans.

An eerie silence had settled over the small room as the group talked quietly about where they should go; all of the doors were locked. During this time, Carson checked his inventory to see what he had left; two clips for the MA5B, six clips for the pistol, four grenades and three plasma grenades. He didn't count or say anything about the plasma blade he'd picked up, mainly because he wasn't sure how to use it.

Then, the silence was broken as all Hell broke loose. Every door in the room had opened and dozens of Covenant troops flooded in, one Elite from each of the four doors with a dozen Grunts and Jackals following them. Carson ripped a grenade from the bandolier, primed it and threw it with all his might toward the nearest group of Covenant. Several of the Grunts squealed and barked and chirped and tried to dive out of the way, only far too slowly. They were blown apart by the killing weapon, and several of the fragments were implanted into the Elite that led them. It doubled over and howled in pain and anguish as several of its organs were punctured. David unleashed his MA5B into the masses of Covenant, slaughtering the Grunts and causing an Elite's shields to flicker and, eventually, fail as another Marine joined him. The combined force of both the assault rifles sent the Elite sprawling onto the floor in a puddle of its own blood.

By the time those two groups were taken care of, the rest had been eliminated by the Spartans. So far, the Covenant seemed to be launching surprise attacks on the Marines, as if to try to catch them off guard every time and whittle away at their numbers through sheer fright and, thus far, it hadn't worked—mainly due to the Spartans and their extraordinary speed, strength, and reaction times. David breathed a sigh of relief, suddenly much more cheerful and hopeful.

It seemed like any time the Spartans were around, things seemed so much less hopeless, no matter what the odds.

The three Spartans moved toward the doors on the left side of the room and almost left the Marines behind. Carson stood and rallied all of the Marines to him, then ordered them to follow the Spartans through the doors, which opened as they sensed the organisms approach. "All right, everyone stay cool. Yell if you see anything."

Both doors were about ten feet apart and opened to reveal two ramps leading downward slightly for about fifteen feet before levelling out and going off to the left and to the right. Carson looked to the right as soon as his feet hit the bottom of the ramp and found that it extended another thirty feet and then ended in a dead end. He worked his way to the end of the corridor behind him and waited for the rest of the squad to catch up to him, seeing as he was the first through the door.

Soon, the group of four Marines and three Spartans were getting ready to advance through yet another door in front of them. The Spartans burst through first, now catching the Covenant off guard. Carson brought his sniper rifle to bear and searched the top of the new room, which he now knew was a hangar. Supply crates littered the floor, which was now being coated in shell casings, scorch marks, and blood of all colors. Carson spotted a crimson-colored one on the top floor in front of him. He inhaled deeply, set the sight on it's head and pulled the trigger.

In a split second, where the Elite's head should have been was a mist of purple blood. With a smile, David set his sights on a pair of Jackals, waited for them to line up and blew them both cleanly in half with one shot. Another Elite was rounding the corner on the left side of the hangar, which had a small gap separating the large rise in the room from the take-off area, which was currently blocked by an energy shield. David levelled the sniper rifle's sights on it's head and inhaled deeply. The crosshairs stopped shaking and he eased his index finger on the trigger, but stopped as a Marine dove in front of him as he tried to avoid a plasma grenade, but instead had his head blown off by the Elite.

David cursed rather loudly, slung the rifle over his shoulder, grabbed the MA5B and charged headlong into battle. In one swift movement he primed a plasma grenade, stuck it to an Elite, swung around, fired a volley of bullets into a trio of grunts, and dove out of the way of a plasma grenade meant for his head. As soon as he hit the ground, David shot back to his feet and swept the area with his battle rifle. Blood was splattered just about everywhere, and the smouldering remains of a Marine and several Covenant lay scattered about.

However, the survivors had little time to rest, for another batch of troops were pouring through the door that they had come through and another one on the right wall. The hangar soon echoed with the sounds of battle as Humanity engaged it's greatest threat yet again. David primed his final fragmentation grenade and lobbed it into the nearest group of enemies that the Spartans had not yet demolished and took cover behind a pair of crates stacked haphazardly against the large tower that dominated the room. He he moved to peek around the corner, the hand he set on the floor to brace himself encountered

somethingâ€|sticky. His eyes snapped down and his hand immediately shot back to his body upon what he saw; coagulated blood lay thickly on the floor; red blood.

David slowly moved around the crate and gagged at what he saw; two corpses lay in pools of the thick liquid, one of whom's face was half-way melted off, the other with a gaping hole in his chest. Miraculously, both sets of dog tags had survived, and Carson added theirs to his rapidly filling chain of them, two of which were his own. With a sigh, he collected their ammo and grenades (seeing as the Spartans had eliminated the Covenant on this side of the hangar and were collecting supplies and dog tags themselves) and jogged over to them. Only one Marine had died so far, and the Spartans intended to keep it that way as the group slowly crept to the other side of the hangar, which had even more crates scattered about and a Wraith tank sitting amongst them.

"Uh ohâ€|" commented Carson, "all the doors on this level are locked. There's no way through here."

"Give me a minute and I can have a door open for us."

As if on cue, torrents of Covenant appeared, coming from doors on the other side of the hangar, and one door above them. Needles streaked past Carson and the other three Marines as they dove for cover and returned fire. Grunts upstairs were firing (with pathetic accuracy) at Carson and the others from upstairs, which he dealt with swiftly by lobbing a grenade up there. His reward was two fold; a Grunt barked a warning shortly after the grenade landed, but was too slow in getting out of the way, as were the others, and were all blown off of the upper level. However, a Grunt on the ground got a lucky shot with a needler and landed a round in the back of David's hand and promptly exploded, leaving several tiny cuts along the back of his hand.

"You'd better hurry it up, Cortana, we can't keep this up all day!" shouted the Sergeant.

The Grunt, and it's three comrades, were then dealt with by the Spartans, who sprayed them with bullets from their MA5Bs. David thought that they would finally be getting a moment's peace, but that small hope was shattered when a pair of Hunters emerged from the doors to the group's right. Several curses were shouted as they fired at the Marines, all of whom dove out of the way. Carson, however, picked the wrong spot to jump and, as soon as he stood from his dive, was blown backwards by a fuel rod round that had exploded a couple feet in front of him. He flew for a good fifteen feet before slamming in to the energy field blocking the exit to the hangar and promptly fell to the ground. For a brief minute, he blanked out, but as soon as he regained consciousness, David stood and raised his rifle, only to find several concerned Marines staring at him.

"Damn, you're one tough sunnuvabitch to kill."

With a smile, Carson replied, "I'm just lucky."

He stood with the help of several helping hands and staggered over to the door Cortana had unlocked. They all moved through and found themselves in yet _another_ narrow corridor with a ramp leading up to a small circular room at the top with some sort of pipe in the

middle, then another corridor to the right of it leading even farther up. Amazingly, no Covenant were on either of those two ramps, nor the upper area of the hangar it led them to. The third floor, however, was a different story.

As soon as they exited the second set of ramps leading up to the third floor, directly to their right were a pair of Covenant supply crates. Farther to the right was a pair of doors—one set of which was open, and inside were around a dozen Covenant, consisting mainly of Grunts and one Elite. The silver Spartan asked for a grenade, which Carson gladly gave him, primed it and flung the killing device into the doorway on the catwalk, and it landed in the middle of the group. Cries of anger and fear echoed just before the grenade went off and then all was silent as the Spartans moved forward to check for survivors. As the Marines moved forward, Carson had an idea.

"Does anyone have any wire?"

One marine nodded and handed him a small piece of wire, just long enough to stretch across the doorway, which Carson took and grabbed one of his grenades. He pulled the pin, counted to five, jammed the handle down and slammed the pin back in. David then tied the wire to the pin of the grenade and stuck it to the wall with a slight spray of biofoam, and did the same with the other piece of wire. Satisfied, he gathered his assault rifle and caught up to the rest of the Marines, who had continued on during the process.

"What was that all about?" inquired one man.

"Well," David began, "I saw a vid about the Vietnam War, which occurred back in the late 1960's. Apparently, people used what were called 'booby-traps' and set them for the other side's soldiers, who set the devices off and were killed. I figure this ought to work nicely."

The man nodded and watched the Spartans work at the end of the catwalk, which was cleared in seconds. They waved the Marines forward and continued through yet another doorway, which was concealed by another set of crates. As soon as the marines entered that same doorway, a deafening explosion echoed through the hangar. The Covenant had set off Carson's trap, who continued onward with a small smile.

After an uneventful ten minutes, the Marines reached the bridge, which was located deep in the bowels of the Covenant ship. David unslung his sniper rifle and crept forward slowly, scanning the room at the same time. Three Elites and maybe two dozen Grunts, which would normally be easy if the Elite marching around the control station hadn't been armed with a plasma blade, which could slice a human in half like a very hot knife through very warm butter.

"Aim for the yellow one." whispered one of the Spartans.

David nodded slowly and raised the rifle, levelling his sights on the Elite's head. He inhaled slowly, causing the sights to stop shaking. With two taps of his fingers, the creature's head was gone and the Spartans and Marines were charging into the large room. Carson sighted one of the two remaining Elites, a Veteran, and squeezed the trigger. He repeated the process on the third, who had taken cover

behind one of the four pillars that supported the room, then reloaded as the others finished off the survivors.

The room was quickly cleared and the Marines made for the control center, which was elevated slightly higher than the rest of the room.

"We can set up shop and watch the store while you go rescue the Cap'n, Chief." said the marine Sergeant. Master Chief nodded wordlessly and disappeared with the other two Spartans through a door on the left of the room. The marines, expecting a long wait, began to talk quietly amongst themselves, while David remained on the edge of the group, dangerously near the edge of the control platform. Sarge was standing right in front of him, talking to a Private quietly.

Deciding to try and get some sleep, David shut his eyes and dozed standing up, though it didn't last long. Not five minutes into his doze, David felt something brush against him. By the time he realized what it was, it was too late; he was falling off the edge of the platform. He smashed his head into a corner of the floor as he fell into a small hole, and the last thing he heard before he slipped into unconsciousness was the ignition of plasma blades.

****END CHAPTER 6****

****A/N: Sorry it took so longâ€¦I had a rather nasty case of writer's block. Anyway, I'm back! R&R, please! SEE YOU NEXT CHAPTER!****

7. Truth and Reconciliation III: Extraction

****A/N: Ahâ€¦well, I have returnedâ€¦and I got reviews! Yay! I'd like to respond to those now.****

****Liljimmyurine: Okay, first off, let me educate you a bit, my friend. Yes, the Spartans are a Special Operations division, and yes some of that is true, BUT they also operate along the lines of today's current military. Therefore, not all of them would hold the rank of Petty Officers, much like the British SAS or the US Navy SEALs. You are going by what Bungie and the writers of the books have written, and I can go ahead and tell you, none of them have any military experience or knowledge. Secondly, I've already mentioned the rule bending several times in the Author's Notes sections, so maybe you should pay attention to them. Finally, I don't know how much you know about biology, but plasma is in your blood. Therefore, going by what chemistry tells us, the plasma in the weapons would infuse into one's blood, therefore harming the heart and muscles and whatever else it comes in contact with, quite a lot like a snake's neurotoxin. As an afterthought, there were over 300 SPARTANS created, so OF COURSE they wouldn't be mentioned! ****

****Blue Orange: Ermâ€¦thanks**
>

****Warrior: You ain't kidding.****

****Warp Ligia Obscura: Thanks!**
>

****The Truth and Reconciliation****

****Part III****

****Extraction****

'Trayl 'Fusamee grinned as he cleaved the last of the human scum in two. How he enjoyed killing the frail, pathetic creatures as they were, and it had been too long—far too long since he had last spilled their blood. Being a Shipmaster as he was, 'Trayl rarely ever went out into the fields of combat any more, and the human raids on ships were few and far between, making it difficult to keep his combat skills in shape. As the human's body fell to the floor, he turned and stalked down the ramp that led up to the command center and turned to a Special Operations trooper that stood at attention at the bottom.

"'Takamee, is it?" he growled once he had reached the bottom of the slope. The Elite nodded quickly, but dared not speak.

"Go and alert the Fleetmaster of this—incident. 'Zalamee and I will purge this human filth from our great vessel. Move quickly, for I have reason to believe that the Demon is among them."

Without hesitation, the Elite took flight, as though the Prophets themselves were snapping at his heels. With a huff of approval, Ship Master 'Fusamee turned to 'Zalamee, who was kneeling next to the human that had fallen off of the platform. A small amount of blood lay pooled near the back of his head, and the human's—helmet, was it?...had fallen off and lay discarded and cracked right next to his head.

"Well?"

"The human lives—unconscious is my guess."

'Fusamee knelt down to get a better look at the human, more than just slightly interested in it. No mere human would be able to survive a fall of that height, especially after smashing it's head into the floor like that, as 'Fusamee should well know for he had—experimented, but somehow—this one was different. He didn't appear to be one of the Demons, but he was an odd one nevertheless.

"Leave him there, we will question him later. Search the rest of the control room, then we'll move on to the prison blocks."

With a small nod, 'Zalamee stood, engaged his active camouflage and moved around the back of the room, checking each and every nook and cranny for any signs of humans as 'Fusamee moved back up to the command console to do the same. As he was eyeing the corpses that lay at his feet, the chime of a door opening echoed through the room and 'Fusamee immediately activated his camouflage and activated his energy blade. Just as he made it to the bottom of the ramp, a sniper round screeched past his head and struck 'Zalamee's, causing it to immediately disappear.

'Fusamee immediately dove behind the nearest cover as more shots ripped through the air toward him, narrowly missing both of his legs. He chanced a glance around the pillar he hid behind and cursed

quietly at his luck; there were not one, but three Demons moving through the doorway, apparently escorting the human leader and several others through the ship from the cell blocks. As one of the Demons approached, 'Fusamee inched around the pillar slowly, but not so far as to put himself within sight of the sniper. As the Demon passed, 'Fusamee made his move. He leapt forward with a battle cry and brought the Plasma Sword held in his hand down toward the Demon, only to have it blown off.

He fell to the floor with a howl of pain as blood gushed from the wound, nerve endings in his arm lit afire. However, his attention was drawn away from his hand by the soft click of an Assault Rifle being readied to fire. Cold steel was suddenly inches away from his head, held by a gloved hand. The Demon hesitated for a moment as he stared down at the Elite curled up in the floor.

"Do it, Demonâ€|" the Elite spoke in his best English, "or you will regret it."

David awoke slowly as the assault rifle thunder echoed in the small room. His vision blurred in and out and his head ached like hell. Carefully, he pushed himself up into a sitting position and groaned softly as a sudden wave of dizziness overcame him. After a moment or two, the dizziness passed and David grabbed his now cracked helmet and pulled himself up over the side of the gap and onto the floor, where his hand met something metallic. Carson's head snapped up, and sighed and shook his head at what was above him; a fellow Marine.

"Hey, how about a hand here?"

The Marine jumped at the voice and looked down, eyes wide in surprise as he lowered a hand to his wounded comrade, which Carson gratefully accepted. As soon as he was upright, Carson lost his balance and an electric jolt of pain screeched through his body, climaxing in his head. The room spun wildly for several seconds as he leaned against one of the many pillars that held the ceiling up in the room, attempting to calm his searing headache. Finally, it stopped and he managed to work his way over to the Marines. The Captain was the first to speak.

"Marine, what happened here?"

Carson, still dazed from his fall, attempted to recall what had happened to his comrades and, after several awkward moments of silence, he finally remembered. "We were ambushed, sir. Pair of Elites, cloaked. I hadn't slept since we landed on this damn ring, so I took the moment of peace to doze.

We were all standing up on the command console, most of the men were talking. I fell asleep right behind Sarge up there, standing up. All of a sudden, I felt something brush against me and push me backwards, and the next thing I knew I was falling. Last thing I heard before I blanked out was plasma blades. That's all I know, sir."

The captain nodded and rubbed his chin, apparently in deep thought. In the meantime, Cortana attempted to radio Foehammer for a pickup, but only received that she had been engaged and couldn't get to them for a pickup. One of the Marines said something about being trapped and screwed, but Carson wasn't paying much attention; he was too busy

up on the command deck collecting supplies, which amounted to one slightly damaged MA5B, an M6D pistol, six fragmentation grenades, twenty clips for the AR, and ten for the handgun.

As he made his way back down to the other Marines, he heard the Captain say something about a drop ship to Cortana. At the moment, Carson neither cared to listen nor cared about any plans; he just wanted to get off of this ship and get some sleep, if that was even possible. The three Spartans had rushed through a door on the right and the Marines began to follow behind them, Carson taking the rear behind the Captain to guard their backs as the din of battle resounded ahead of them, echoing through the otherwise quiet Covenant vessel.

Carson could immediately tell something was very wrong; the sounds of battle had faded, yes, but there was something elseâ€|missing. Then, in the next second, he knew it; machinery. The entire ship should be alive with the sounds of machinery operating, systems humming, but there was nothing, no noise at all. They were planning something, the bastards, and Carson knew it, and apparently the Captain did to, for he called for the Marines to stay on their toes. As they neared the end of the several corridors they had come through to get to the bridge/brig area, Carson whispered for everyone to stop suddenly, and even the Spartans did so as he crept toward the door that would lead them into the hangar.

Carson heard voices on the other side of the door, some extremely high pitched, some low bass, and none of which were human. It was most definitely a Covenant ambush waiting for them at the hangar. He crept slowly back to the squad and moved to the Captain. "Ambush on the other side, sir. At least two Elites, several Gruntsâ€|not sure of anything else that might be past the door, though." he whispered.

The Captain nodded to Chief, who then turned to his fellow Spartans and said something to them apparently, for they nodded to both the Captain and the Master Chief. The three Spartans produced grenades from various places upon their persons and readied themselves at the door, priming the grenades before stepping forward and hurtling them at the unsuspecting Covenant with all their might. The grenades exploded as soon as they hit the ground, flinging bodies and body parts in every direction.

Carson smiled evilly as he watched the Spartans massacre the confused and surprised Covenant troops. The bastards deserved every single bullet that was put into them in his mind for their slaughters of innocent women and childrenâ€|for the death of his brotherâ€|then, unexpectedly, a surprising amount of rage consumed David Carson at that exact moment. He broke away from the other Marines into a full sprint, past the Spartans and into a crowd of Covenant troops, MA5B blazing the whole way, mowing down a column of Grunts as they advanced, and otherwise scaring the living shit out of the Covenant. As the clip ran dry with a rather irritating 'click', David suddenly remembered the Plasma sword hanging at his side.

He immediately ripped it from his belt, activated it and proceeded to ram it into the gut of the nearest Covenant Elite. The creature roared in pain and anger as Carson twisted the blade to the left and yanked it to the right, effectively slicing the Elite in two and splattering it's innards all over the floor. David spun completely in

a circle, arm extended, decapitating several Grunts and catching a Veteran Elite in the side as it jumped back. Immediately, Carson pushed off of his left foot, momentum still moving forward, and rammed the blade into the Elite's chest, and it immediately collapsed upon the blade, slipping down it and onto the floor, cleaved in two from the torso up.

Regaining his senses, Carson began to make his way back to his stunned comrades as they boarded the commandeered dropship. He collapsed into the harness and looked down at his hand, which was still clutching the now extinguished blade. David rubbed his face with his free hand as he mulled over the events of the last minute and a half. What had triggered that massive rage that had suddenly taken control of him? Nothing had ever seemed to do that before, except for his first combat on Jericho IV six years ago—but that was psychological fear, not pure rage. Fear of death.

Maybe _that's_ what did it. His brother's—yes, it all made sense to him now. David was now not just fighting for himself, he was fighting for every man, woman and child any Covenant troop had ever killed, whether on the ground or from space. Humanity was on the brink of being wiped from the universe, and he was determined to put everything he had forward in stopping the Covenant's genocidal campaign—right after he got some sleep, which he intended to do on their way back to Alpha.

As the drop ship exited the hangar (Carson didn't notice the whole deal with the Hunter crushing, due to his fatigue/deep thought), he rested his head against the fuselage of the craft and closed his eyes. Not soon after, he was asleep.

****A/N: DONE! And not too long of a wait, either, considering my other updates. R&R please!****

8. The Other Side of the Spectrum

****A/N: Whoot! One chapter closer to the end of the first in a trilogy! But, before I get started, I'd like to point a few things out.**
>

****To all of my reviewers, thank you and keep sending in those reviews!****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter 8****

****The Other Side of the Spectrum****

'Takamee grunted unhappily as he observed the other troops aboard his drop ship; none of them seemed fit for combat except for his own Rangers, 'Kanamee and 'Zukamee. The rest were low-ranking Grunts and Elites, far below his standard of a soldier. The Elite shifted his weight as the drop ship altered course yet again; it seemed that the blasted pilot was lost—again. Clicking his mandibles in frustration, 'Takamee squeezed past the Elites in the ship and stepped up into the cockpit.

"You!" he snapped at the Grunt pilot, "What's taking so long?"

The Grunt yelped and jumped slightly. "Fleet Master has changed our course again. We'll be there soonâ€|but me have a bad feeling about this."

'Takamee growled softly then stalked back through the ship and strapped himself in next to 'Kanamee and 'Zukamee, neither of whom asked any questions; they both knew that their commander had a short temper and an itchy trigger finger. The interior of the drop ship became noticeably colder and a foreboding sense of dread seemed to wash over everyone within as they neared their destination. Many of the Grunts and even some Elites seemed to be on edgeâ€|close to frightened, even.

'Takamee's stomach lurched as the ship slowed to a halt and began it's descent to the ground. He gripped his Plasma Rifle tightly in his claw as the flaps opened and 'Takamee was sure to be the first one outâ€|right into the murky, thigh deep swamp water, which he was quick to let everyone know by cursing loudly in as many tongues as he could think of. After a few moments of this, he led his Elites to the Nav point that had been set by the Grunt pilot on his HUD.

Rain flickered off 'Takamee's shields as the small group of Covenant troopers stalked through the dark swamp, the eerie fog washing over them like a blanket. Red blips would suddenly appear on his radar occasionally, only to disappear the second he noticed. Something was definitely amiss with the swamp, which gave 'Takamee even more reason to want out of it; his nerves were rattled, true, but he'd never let the warriors around him know it.

The small group finally arrived at a medium sized depression, just across the way of a fallen tree. Two or three Shade turrets had already been set up with more being set up by Grunts of low status. Several of the miniscule creatures yapped and waddled about, going about their assigned tasks or, more likely, slacking off and sleeping. A group of seven or eight Elites, most of them low ranking Rookies, stood near a gaping hole dug into the side of an even larger hillâ€|even though 'mountain' probably would have been a better word. They scattered as the Rangers came closer and their leader, a Zealot in gold armor, turned to greet them.

"Ah, you've arrived." he spoke, garnering the attention of the entire crew.

Introductions of both parties were made and the large group descended down into the depths, completely oblivious to what lay ahead of them. Deeper and deeper they delved, pausing occasionally to leave a contingent of Grunts behind to protect their rear with Shade Turrets and the like. Finally, after what seemed to be an eternity, the Elites reached their destination; a single door at the very bottom of the complex. 'Zalamee, the Zealot Elite in gold armor, simply grunted gruffly and one of the younger ones, a Rookie by the name of 'Zamamee, stepped forward and began tinkering with the lock mechanism of the door. It opened relatively quickly, revealing a mostly empty cavernous room so large that could have fit in half a hangar aboard the _Truth and Reconciliation_.

Most of the remaining Elites, around a baker's dozen or so, stalked inside on high alert, ready for anything that could be thrown at

them. Just as 'Takamee was about to lead his squad in, 'Zalamee stopped him.

"Wait here, 'Takamee. Something about this room is strangeâ€¦if anything comes through those doors," he inclined his head to the two pairs of doors on the left and right sides of the room, "have 'Zamamee here lock this one down as tightly as possible."

'Takamee knew better than to question orders, so he nodded and held his now trio of soldiers back in reserve as 'Zalamee went to join his troops. 'Takamee's grip became unusually tight around the triggers of his Plasma Rifle as he watched, trying to ignore the nagging voice in the back of his mind telling him to run as fast as he could toward the exit. Minutes passed by agonizingly slowly as the Elites waited for something to happen, never once bothering to look toward the roof; after all, who in his right mind would have?

One trooper did, and nearly leapt out of his skin. 'Above! Above!' he cried repeatedly, drawing everyone's attention toward the roof and causing several to backpedal; the ceiling was alive and squirming. Hundreds of small, bulbous creatures were latched there, apparently awoken from their slumber by the Elite's yell. As if they were one body, the tiny things detached themselves from the roof and rained upon the Elites below, who opened fire at once.

'Takamee merely stared in awe at what was happening, but was snapped by reality by a flaming heat in his right claw; the weapon had overheated. One by one, the Elites fell to the onslaught, their screams and shouts of agony ringing in 'Takamee's ears. Only one made it through the door, which was sealed immediately afterward. 'Takamee swallowed a lump that had built up in his throat and turned to the survivors, who were just as much dumbstruck and in shock as he was.

"'Zamamee, lock it downâ€¦lock it down so tightly that no living creature will be able to enter or exit."

He watched the younger Elite go to work with shaking hands, using every trick he knew to keep the door containing the abominations locked forever.

****A/N:** Yeah, I know it's short, but I've had a severe case of writer's block with this oneâ€¦hopefully, the next chapter will come along faster. Your reviews do help inspire me and get me going, so keep em coming. Also, feel free to put some ideas out there. Thanks!**

****~Psychotic Marine****

9. Getting to Know Each Other

****The Marines of Charlie Company:****

****Chapter Nine****

****Getting to Know Each Other****

"Heyâ€¦hey buddy! Wake up!" The voice kept repeating over and over, thumping into David's slumbering conscious.

Finally, Carson slowly allowed his eyes to open. They were back at Alpha Base now, apparently out on the landing pads, and a large group of men and women had gathered there to welcome Captain Keyes and the surviving Marines that had rescued him. Suddenly, an uproarious noise erupted from the crowd as the Corporal stood up and groggily marched down the ramp. He felt dozens of hands patting him on the back and, at first, was confused beyond all reason, but then he realized why; of all the Marines he left with, David was the only one left alive from the original rescue teamâ€|partly from luck, but mostly fromâ€|luck.

David smiled as best he could (exhaustion kept him from being all-around friendly) and worked his way through the crowds of cheering (and presumably drunk) Marines and technicians. David staggered doggedly through the twisting corridors along his memorized route to his 'room', which was really nothing more than a hole carved in the wall with a bed set up in it, a light fixture attached to the roof and clothes piled in the corner. He stripped off his armor and boots and helmet, set them all near the foot of his bed, and collapsed there.

While not exactly the most comfortable thing to do, it was practical; David's body had just about given out from the sheer amount of strain put onto it. Because of his quick entry onto said mattress, however, he didn't notice the second being lying there; that person being Cassandra, or Sally for short, Connors. She hadn't been asleep, but instead watched the young man stagger in and collapse, spurring a moment of worry, then of relief.

'So, he did surviveâ€|thank God' Cassandra thought as she pulled the somewhat inadequate covers over David. The red-haired Lieutenant sat and watched the man sleep; it was the first time she'd really gotten a good look at him. David's face, she observed, was rugged and squared, his chin grayish-black with day-old stubble. Battle scars lined his somewhat lanky, yet cut, torso. The man's black hair was cut short, but not newly cut; there was some length to it.

Cassandra smiled lovingly and stood from the side of the bed, her eyes still locked on the person she just couldn't get out of her mind. She exited the room with a soft sigh and pulled her hair up into a loose ponytail, deciding now would be as good a time as any to grab some food from the chow hall; she hadn't eaten all day.

It took a few minutes for her to navigate the corridors of the base and find the mess hall, located centrally in the 'base', grabbed some 'food' (that's not what she would call it) and found a place to sit among some of the troops, who were all laughing and generally having a good time. Now that Captain Keyes was back, the 'resistance' stood a chance.

However, the mood changed once she sat down and started eating; all eyes were upon her. One of the men sitting beside her was in the dropship that had brought them to Alpha Base. "So," he asked, "how is our resident hero?"

"Who, David?"

The men around her nodded and watched, intrigued by the woman that

was closer to one of the men that had rescued the good Captain.

"He's exhausted, to say the least. Just kinda wandered in and passed out."

Their faces sullened a little bit; he wasn't invincible or a Spartan, but damn close in their minds. Hell, hers too. The next few minutes of the meal was spent in utter silence at that particular table, but utter silence in the cafeteria not soon after Cassandra had finished eating. When the quiet settled in, she glanced around the room until her eyes settled on what had caused the sudden drop in noise; there, in the doorway, stood four soldiers; Sergeant Avery Johnson, who everyone knew and most loathed, Captain Jacob Keyes, the Marines' fearless leader and father figure to many, and David Carson, a Marine that most didn't even know about until earlier in the evening. To the Marines, Corporal Carson was just another one of them; not a figure of authority, not an inhuman Spartan, but a supersoldier in his own right; he'd survived what countless others hadn't. He'd taken an Elite on in hand-to-hand combat.

Cassandra watched the trio move through the crowd in utter silence, their footfalls echoing ominously in the cavernous room. The Captain took up position at the head of the mess hall; he obviously had something to say and even the cooks sat down to listen.

"Now that I have your attention," the Captain began, "there are a few things that must be said. First, you've been working hard under the imposed command, and I thank you for that; the circumstances have obviously been difficult."

The Marines murmured in agreement.

"Countless acts of heroism have been conducted thus far, whether recognized or not. We've lost many menâ€¦"

Cassandra didn't hear much after that; her attention was drawn to the man she'd barely known three days. He looked sharp in his combat fatigues, standing at attention behind Keyes and beside Sergeant Johnson. Cassandra noted that his posture was perfect, although his face and eyes showed otherwise; he was tired, on the verge of exhaustion if he hadn't broken that point already. She watched as he cast glances about the room, searching for somethingâ€¦and finding it when their eyes locked. David inclined his head slightly, so much so that it was barely noticeable, but his way of saying 'Hello' to her while at attention; she smiled in return.

"â€¦we must secure this weapon before the Covenant do. Sergeant Carson and Sergeant Johnson will be leading the teams that will accompany me. Sergeants, name your fire teams now."

Johnson was first and slowly called out the names of the men he'd be taking with him; some of the men she knew, others she didn't. The last name called was Jenkins, Wallace A. Cassandra had met him the other day on base, and he seemed a nice kid, if a bit green. She could remember bits of the conversation they had; trivial stuff, really, basic grunt conversation about Earth, family and whether or not the Marines had a chance. No one really talked about their present situation; always before or what they would do after. Pessimism was self-destructive to everyone, so spirits had to remain

high.

David was much faster and rattled the names off; the people in his team consisted mostly of members of Charlie Company that had survived Reach and mixed a people from Able and Bravo of the Eighty-Fifth Infantry Division in there. Cassandra half-expected noise to commence soon afterwards, at least a few groans or grunts, but there was nothing but utter silence until Captain Keyes spoke again.

"I don't have to tell you how important this mission is. Even now, the Spartans and a Marine strike team are working to discern the location of Halo's Control Room." He paused for a second and watched the crowd's reaction; there was none, relatively. "Strike teams, we'll be deploying within the hour, so rest up."

Sound filled the room again as everyone dispersed but Cassandra, David, Johnson and Captain Keyes. From what she could hear, they were discussing the 'Great Weapon' that Halo contained and plans to retrieve it. Cassandra merely waited and watched the three men converse, and sighed when the older two left. She got to her feet and turned to leave, but stopped, turned around and scanned the room to find him approaching with a bit of a forced grin on his face.

"Hi there." he said cheerfully.

"Hi." She replied back, but without most of his enthusiasm. He sat down in a chair next to the one she had sunk back into, and it was then that she got her first real look at him. The Marine sitting next to her may have looked young and vibrant at one time, but that was all gone; now, he looked just like every other veteran—haggard and tired, but in an attractive way.

"We really didn't have time to get to know each other before, so I figured now would be as good a time as any."

Cassandra smiled and insisted that he speak first. She learned that David was born on Earth, in the United States as a matter of fact, and had been raised on Reach and Jericho IV, and also served in it's defense with his brother, Michael. Their parents had been killed when Jericho fell to the Covenant, but they managed to escape with a squad of Marines. It was then that they officially joined the UNSC. She listened intently as he described the next couple years of his life, moving from planet to planet and failing in each attempt made to defend them. Finally, he'd been selected to join the Autumn's crew and was shipped out to Reach.

Cassandra, in turn, shared her own story; she was born and raised on Reach and joined the military as soon as she could. While not as exciting as the stuff David did, she had seen her fair share of action on Reach alone as a drop ship pilot, and nearly got shot down on several occasions. Near the end, she'd seen plenty of infantry combat and was involved in a good deal herself before evacuating as many as she could to the Autumn.

Afterward, they just sat in silence and either stared at the floor or each other; neither really had much more to say and the rest of the hour passed rather quickly. Although their silence was awkward, Cassandra didn't really feel uncomfortable about it just spending time around this man made her feel better for some reason and stirred feelings and emotions she hadn't known for a long time. It was

interrupted by his name being called over the radio.

He stood, and she followed suit. Neither moved for a second, but he started to leave and she quickly found herself liplocked with him. This lasted a few precious moments before she pulled back, blushing, and unsure of what had come over her.

"Be careful, David. Please."

David gave her a reassuring smile.

"I'm always carefulâ€|besides, now I've got a reason to come back."

A/N: Character development, ahoy! Heh, hope ya'll enjoyed thatâ€|now, review, damn it! I COMMANDETH THEE!

10. Things Are Getting Wierd

The Marines of Charlie Company

Chapter 10:

Things Are Getting Weirdâ€|

Since most of the officers on board the Pillar of Autumn had been killed either in the landing or aboard the ship, the NCOs had taken over leading the squads and men. David had been promoted not twenty minutes after he got back to Alpha Base, and promptly fell asleep afterward, but was awoken an hour or two later (he couldn't be sure, exactly; the Chronometer he'd worn on his wrist had been lost in the crash) and told that he'd be accompanying the Captain on a mission of great importance as a squad leader and to pick the people he'd take.

The obvious choices for him were the surviving members of Charlie Company from Reach, since he'd worked with all of them and led a few of them before in combat. However, there weren't enough survivors to produce a full assault team, so he worked with what he had; men from Able and Bravo companies of the same battalion. Most of them were around his age, but Privates Tiem and Cang were younger than the others and fresh out of high school.

As David went through this mental check in his mind, he was still observant of his surrounding. At present, they were over what appeared to be a lush jungle forest, zipping along just above the treeline in a Pelican transport. His orders were to maneuver around to the rear of the structure the Captain located and secure it for an alternate escape route in case the Marines were ambushed by the Covenant and the front entrance was sealed. David fingered the trigger of the M90 shotgun that rested across his lap, glad to have the insanely powerful weapon with him; the next best thing would have been a rocket launcher.

David shifted his view around the cargo area of the Pelican and watched the soldiers under his command, who were all either talking and laughing or sitting still and concentrating on what was to come. 'This is Charlie Company,' he thought quietly to himself as he watched the other soldiers, 'my Charlie Company.' David tightened

his grip on the handle near his head at the rear of the Pelican as the drop ship changed course sharply. It was raining now and, frankly, putting David on edge; he didn't like rain—especially if he had to fight in it.

Below, the scenery changed from a lush green jungle to a foggy, damp, murky swamp. That brought back some particularly bad memories from the fighting back on Jericho IV, but he'd have time to contemplate _that_ later; right now, he had a mission to lead. David felt his stomach rise slightly as the Pelican slowed and began to descend. He was the first one out of the ship and into the cool water that waited below and landed with a bit of a splash.

"Sergeant Johnson, this is second squad. We're on the ground and moving to secure your exfil, over."

David didn't wait for a reply and waved his squad forward, taking the point ahead of everyone else. They moved slowly through the water and underbrush and spread out to cover more ground, yet close enough together to provide a base of fire if it came to it. David's squad took twenty minutes to get to the structure they were designated to secure and, surprisingly enough, met no resistance along the way. He knew that this was _not_ a good sign; thus far, the Covenant fought like dogs wherever they went and rarely left their flanks exposed to anything the Humans threw at them. After he told the Marines to stay alert, he pressed ahead of the group in a low crouch, shotgun at the ready and finger hovering over the trigger, to try and see what he could see, which wasn't much in the thick fog.

Illumination ahead caught the Marine's attention and he picked up his pace. At last, he could see their target; a structure that had been cut into the side of a rather large hill that apparently contained an elevator shaft and not much else. He waved the Marines under his command, around two dozen or so, forward and they swept in to secure the building, only to find that it was empty. David ordered some field lights to be set up (it was rather dark, after all) and a squad down the shaft to investigate and clear any enemies. Five or six shots echoed about a minute after they descended, and all was quiet. The squad reported that there was nothing but a grunt or two, thankfully, and received orders to hold position and wait for the Captain and his squad.

Upstairs, all the Marines had to do now was sit and wait. David tuned his radio into Johnson's frequency and sat nearest the doorway, waiting for something to happen. He didn't have to wait long. David was sitting there near the entrance of the structure with the M90 resting across his lap when transmissions came in—from Johnson's squad and from the men he'd sent down inside. Apparently, the Captain and his team had come across a locked door—a door that the Covenant didn't want anybody getting into.

'Or out of—' David thought solely.

Then, just as they got inside the room, the Comm. Crackled to life.

"_Captain, Sarge can you hear me?"_

"_What's going on up there, soldier?" _came the Captain's voice.

"_We're under attack by some new form of Covenant! They're everywhere, just tearing through us! We can't-argh! Get off me!"_ All went silent. Johnson's voice came on next.

"_Corporal! Corporal, can you hear me? Damn it! Mendoza, get your ass back to second squad's position and find out what the hell is going on!"_

David couldn't hear what Mendoza said; his radio wasn't on. All he could hear was Johnson's reply of;

"_I don't have time for your lip, Soldier! I gave you an-"_

"_Sarge! Listen!"_ That was Bertuzzi.

The next few moments consisted of nothing but noise. A strange, wet squirming sound. Then, the comms suddenly sprang to life again.

"_Argh! Get it off, get it off!"_

"_Hold still!"_

"_There! Mirah!"_

"_Fire! Fire!"_

"_Sergeant, we're surrounded!"_

"_God damn it, Jenkins, fire your weapon!"_

"_There's too many, Sarge!"_

"_Don't even think about it, Marine!"_

"_Jenkins! Jenkins! Damn it, Captain, Jenkins is down!"_

By now, David and over half his squad were on their feet. He spoke first.

"Johnson, what the Hell is going on down there? Johnson, respond!"

There was nothing but the sound of static. David cursed softly and looked to the Marines surrounding him. They were all pale faced and apparently scared out of their wits, and so was he, but David knew that he still had to lead them. Within a few moments, the beginnings of a plan formulated in his mind.

"You, you and you; watch the elevator. Anything that comes up gets blasted to Hell, breathing or not. Kane, try and establish contact with anyone in the area; I mean anyone Human or otherwise. Jones, take Hall and Travis and scout the swamp; see if you can find anything. Fire Teams Echo and Foxtrot, on me. Alpha through Delta, wait here."

A chorus of "Yes sirs!" echoed in the small space, followed by the various clicks and clacks of weapons being locked and loaded. David took a deep breath, stepped onto the elevator and slapped the

ignition. The elevator started down the shaft with a low rumble, clicking of gears and whirring of technology. It only lasted a moment or two, and the Marines were at the bottom, all in a low crouch and turned so that they had a full three hundred and sixty degree view around the room.

David motioned 'Forward' with two fingers, and a pair of Marines obliged, heading toward the alcove that jutted forth from the wall. They gave the 'all clear' signal and the rest moved forward behind them, splitting up to cover both sides of the alcove. David moved in on the left side and crept up on the door, which opened upon sensing his presence. Suddenly getting a very bad feeling about this, he turned to the dozen Marines gathered around him.

"I need six volunteers to come with me; the rest of you, back up the shaft."

Six of the men stepped forward, all from Charlie Company, and the rest shuffled back toward the elevator. To be sure, David didn't move any further until he heard the elevator go back up.

"McClung, Davis, Smith, you through first. Allister, you're on me. Timms, Owen, you wait here. Move!"

11. The Flood

****Warrior:** Unfortunately, yesâ€|poor guys. I hope you're enjoying so far and that this has you enthralled enough to keep reading. Thanks for all your reviews and support.**

****Zichalo:** Uhâ€|thanks? Your last review was chapter fiveâ€|there are now eleven chapters. Just thought I'd give you the head's up.**

****Lecter42:** The barrel got sliced in half, not the weapon; it was still operable.**

****Firebendingguy:** Thanksâ€|but where'd you get Big Red One from? He's not part of the Army's First Infantry Division.**

****NoneAvalible:**** ****Thank you for all of your reviews. As for the Elite, wellâ€|you'll see why he wasn't being hostile.****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter Eleven****

****The Flood****

David was sweating as he and his Marines crept through the eerily silent corridors that linked together to form the Hellish facility that they were in. It had been nearly an hour since contact was lost with Sergeant Johnson and Captain Keyes, but David's squad had yet to see a damn thingâ€|other than damage from previous battles fought, such as shell casings on the ground, plasma scarring, copious amounts of blood and discarded weaponsâ€|but never any bodies, which worried David terribly. The Covenant weren't known for carrying off their dead (more often preferring to leave them where they were), and the Marines normally did so on exfiltration, which had not yet

occurredâ€|

Add that to the fact that there were bullet holes and blast marks up high on the wall far too high for a panicky soldier to aim unless the weapon was fired there intentionally. Upon closer inspection, he found that there were marks of a sickly green blood up high on the walls relative in position to the plasma marks and bullet holes, and that indicated whatever they were fighting had the ability to climb on walls, which virtually meant the Marines had two hundred and seventy degree dome to cover to defend themselves from an attack.

"Timms, Owen, what's your status, over?"

There was static for a second before the reply came.

"_All quiet on this end, Sarge. Nothing near the elevator shaft."_

David went through the list of Marines that had come with him in his head and checked in with all of them regularly. He finally made his way to the main chamber where the Captain and his Squad had been, found it locked, and started to make his way back to catch up to Allister, who he'd left at the top of an incline, only to find him dead. Whatever killed him had done so quickly, efficiently and, most of all, silently. David fished through his pockets, took what ammo and grenades he could find, and then took Allister's dog tags. At that precise moment, everything went straight to Hell.

The Comm. Network exploded as the other five Marines shouted about contacts being everywhere and firing their weapons madly. The three he had left behind at a small junction, McClung, Davis and Smith, reported that all the doors around them were locked and that some sort of Mutated Elites had found their way into the room, followed by what seemed to be small bulbous creatures that wiggled and squirmed and crawled along the roof and walls. Timms and Owen both reported something similar, but the doors leading into the elevator shaft were unlocked; David still had a way to escape.

The young Marine immediately sprinted back in the direction he and Allister had come through, silently cursing at his luck and not being able to drag his comrade's body out of this hellhole. At the moment, though, the only thing that mattered was survival as David's legs carried him at top speed through the Forerunner complex, which were now quite literally _alive_ withâ€|whatever the things were that were crawling the place. He passed through a doorway, only to find two more deceased Marines; Owen and Timms, who had probably made their way here and were ambushed by those creatures. David searched around and found their dog tags, clambered up onto the catwalks they had come down from and made a mad dash for the elevator shafts.

Two doors were Flood free, but the one that led into the elevator room itself was full of them, and _that_ wasn't even the scary part. Not only were there the small creatures he had seen the first time he 'met' the Forerunners, but there were larger forms that looked similar to Elitesâ€|except the head dangled lifelessly from the shoulders down around behind the back, and the right arm was replaced with three long tendrils which, as Carson quickly found out as the first form plowed those tentacles into his chest, were very sharp and powerful enough to send him sprawling to the ground and gasping for

breath.

The tendrils had gone right through David's service armor; he could feel blood flowing from a trio of wounds across his chest. By the time he got reoriented, the creature was bearing down at him again bellowing a strangely warped war cry at a painfully high pitch. Carson brought the shotgun to bear and fired a shell straight through the thing's torso, which blew half the chest cavity out and sent it tumbling backward across the floor. David watched as the limbs twitched for a few more seconds, then stopped with one last great heave.

Sergeant Carson didn't have time to celebrate or study the sickly-green creature any closer, however; a dozen of the smaller forms were squirming right for him. He decided that the shotgun would be ineffective against such a small number, so he dropped it next to him and reached for his assault rifle—only to find that the weapon had cracked under the force of his body hitting the hard floor, so he went to his next alternative; the M6D. David didn't bother to activate the 2X optical zoom; it wouldn't be necessary at this range. Using the iron sights, he fired a single round into the closest of the creatures, which popped like a balloon and, apparently, detonated the others around it, effectively neutralizing half the opposing force with one shot. Slightly surprised, David fired again and took out the other half with extreme ease.

Why did the Forerunners fear such physically weak creatures as the Flood (he had now come to realize that the enemy he fought was none other than the Flood) so greatly? 'No' he told himself, 'they didn't fear the smaller ones—that feared the bigger ones.' After that realization had struck him, David pushed himself back to his feet, holstered the pistol, snatched up his shotgun and carefully approached the door again; it opened upon sensing his presence and he slowly peered through; everything was quiet on the other side—too quiet for anything good to be going on. David stepped through the threshold with the utmost discretion and checked the ceiling first; nothing there. He turned his head in both directions and found nothing on either side of the room—strange.

David stood still for several moments, listening for any sounds that might have come in front of him—but there was nothing but an eerie silence. He pressed his back to the wall in front of him and peeked around the corner; nothing there but the elevator shaft. After a moment of deliberation, he decided that it should be safe enough, dropped into a low crouch and made his way toward the shaft. Nothing came at him as he activated the device and began his ascent toward the surface.

"Charlie Company, this is Sergeant Carson. I'm on my way back up, hold your fire."

A moment passed and no response came. Either the transmission could not penetrate the walls of the compound—or everyone was dead. He held his breath and looked upward as the elevator ascended at a seemingly slow pace, almost like something was trying to torture him by slowing time down. David was understandably worried about the soldiers that were kept under his command; they were his responsibility and David didn't want to let them down. He'd already let enough of his fellow Marines down during his career—like back on Jericho IV. The young Marine shuddered visibly as the elevator

reached the peak, and he nearly forgot about the other soldiers that were supposed to be up there.

Carson was snapped back to reality as he heard the different snaps, cracks and pops of weapons being loaded and readied to fire.

"Hold fire! Hold fire!" he shouted as he observed the soldiers around him. They were all wild-eyed and jittery.

David stepped off the lift and turned to the radio man. "I want you to send a transmission every five minutes detailing our position and status. Everyone else, guard duty in pairs, both at the top of the shaft and at the entrance to this facility in pairs. Switch off every twenty minutes so that no one gets jumpy. Kormak, Malchev, Yaegar and Milev, you're first."

The radio man immediately began broadcasting a message at maximum power and on every frequency he could access; at the moment, the Marines didn't care who found them as long as someone did and could get them the Hell out of this mess. David separated himself from the rest of the Marines and sat down in a corner of the room. He thumbed the dog tags in his hands, silently mourning the death of his comrades; David had known Owen and Timms since basic training, had met McClung, Allister and Davis on Reach, and only knew Smith a short while. In only a matter of minutes, five of his best friends in the Corps, which he didn't have very many of, were gone.

"_Now you see the pain of the Flood."_ came the now familiar voice of the Forerunner known as Tier'Thal.

'I doâ€¦' David thought, shoving the tags into his pocket.

"_You must now know the true purpose of Halo." _This voice was Manaan, Tier'Thal's sister.

'The destruction of the Flood?'

"_In a sense, yes. The Reclaimer will find a solution to this Halo, but the others will be out of his hands. Halo's sole purpose is the destruction of all sentient life large enough to sustain the Flood's mighty appetite. Humans, Covenant, everything. We activated the Halos as a last resortâ€¦and the Flood still persist." _Tier'Thal said solemnly.

'Why me? The Master Chief is far more capable than I am.'

"_You will see in time, young David Carson."_ Replied a third and much older voice, that of Nak'Niral, the oldest of the trio. "_Your destiny runs parallel to that of the Reclaimer; if either should fail, all will perish. You carry a great weight, Young One, but we have confidence your shoulders are broad enough to hold it."_

David grinned softly; he had come to know these three rather well over the last few days (he had been unconscious quite a bit) and could now communicate them in conscious thought. At times, it could be distracting (like when he was talking to Cassandra), but comforting at others. Although David wasn't exactly sure why these Forerunners had so much confidence in him, he knew he couldn't let them down; that would mean destruction of the galaxy again.

"Hey, Sarge!" called the radio man.

"Yeah boy?" David called back.

"There's a Pelican coming in from Alpha's general direction! I can't reach it, for some reason; the swamp seems to be jamming my comms."

"Keep trying; someone's bound to pick up."

12. The Green Man Cometh

****A/N:** Thank you to everyone who has been reading and reviewing my story! Wowâ€|seventeen reviews in just under seven daysâ€|please, keep reading and reviewing!**

****HaloObsessed1010:** Thank you for your enthusiasm! I hope you enjoy the following chapters.**

****NoneAvailible:** It's not a problem; in fact, I'd prefer you to review every chapter! Reviews inspire me to write more faster!**

****Zichalo:** Thanks! You too.**

****Admiral Tway:** I'm not sure what happened to that first chapter, but I'll get around to fixing itâ€|eventually.**

****Warrior:** Nice to see you again. I should give you some cookies or somethingâ€|you've reviewed every chapter.**

****Firebendingguy:** You've got something to look forward to! I've got the sequel to this particular story planned, another one after that and a fourth is in the stages of being planned!**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Chapter Twelve:****

****The Green Man Cometh****

The next hour or so passed by uneventfully as the Marines tried to get a bit of rest now and then if they weren't on guard duty. David and the radio man spent most of that time switching off the broadcasts and trying to reach the Pelican that had now taken up circling over the swamp in an elliptical pattern. After fifty five minutes of fruitless trying, David finally got through.

"_This is Echo-419 to ground team. I'm reading you, five-by-five."_

The group breathed a clearly audible sigh of relief. Help had arrived.

"Echo-419, this is Sergeant David Carson. We need pickup approximately two hundred meters to your eight o'clock, over."

Static crackled for a moment before the veteran pilot

responded.

"_Roger that, Sergeant, but I can't pick you up just yet; I dropped the Master Chief off at your insertion point about an hour ago, but I haven't heard from him since."_

Carson cursed softly as he looked toward the shaft. If the Chief was dead, so was all of their hope of escaping this God-forsaken hellhole. With a huff, he stood, approached the device that would activate the elevator, and sent it down, hoping that the Master Chief would come up before anything else did. David also stationed six or seven of his two dozen Marines at the top of the shaft to watch and make sure nothing other than the Chief made it up. David took the radio again and sat down, leaning against the wall.

"Foehammer, we'll wait for the Chief here. How much fuel do you have left? Over."

"_Enough to circle for another hour or so and still get back to Alpha Base, Sergeant. What happened to the Captain and his team? Over."_

David winced slightly at the question, and many of the other Marines instantly paled. He searched for the right words for several moments, but couldn't seem to find anything that could put what happened into perspective; no word in the English vocabulary did. Eventually, David decided to tell her the flat out truth. Thing was, they didn't even know what happened to them.

"I'mâ€|not entirely sure, Foehammer. One minute, they're fine. The next, they're under attack, but not by the Covenant; these things are much more deadly."

'Takamee grunted as he led his team through the murky swamp, cursing the bushes and fog that impeded their progress. At first, they tried calling for pickup, but the accursed transmitter was destroyed. Fortunately enough for them, the receiver still worked and the Elites managed to pick up a human signal; they were in the same boat and needed a ride badly. The human sending the signal sounded calm and determined, but the others around him did not; they were panicking.

After a quick debate of the risks they were taking, 'Takamee led his small team of five survivors in search of these humans. They were found easily enough, camping at the rear entrance of the Forerunner compound. 'Takamee noticed that their leader had the wits to post guards outside, but stood out with them more often than not. The human, he noticed, talked to his soldiers often, reassuring them that they would be rescued and that the others wouldn't simply abandon them.

To 'Takamee, the Human language was a vulgar one, but easily enough understood. It was merely a simple set of sounds with hard and soft accent and 'vowels' that were present in most words. The Human language sounded a bit harsh to him, but it could prove useful on the battlefield in determining the Enemy's tactics and strength; it also made intercepting and decoding transmissions much easier.

Although tempted to just sweep down and murder the humans like sheep, 'Takamee waited; their transport would be the survivors' only way

out. The Elite gave an annoyed huff at the idea that he would spill none of these vile vermin's blood and continued to watch as the other survivors lay behind him. Hopefully, the transport they had called would not detect them if they stowed aboard; even if it did, eliminating the humans would not be a difficult task.

At least an hour passed before anything happened, but after that, chaos erupted. The familiar thunder of a human 'Assault Rifle' echoed in 'Takamee's ears and awoke him from the doze he'd slipped in to. Curious, 'Takamee peeked up over the hill again and saw the one human he feared; the Master Chief. Cursing under his breath, 'Takamee alerted the rest of his team and informed them to get ready to move out; the Humans had what they had waited for and would be leaving at any second. Just as he predicted, the humans gathered at the entrance to the Holy Temple and began their trek through the swamp.

The small group stayed parallel to the much larger human force, and made sure to stay above them and completely out of sight. Thus far, the vile Parasites had hidden their ugly heads, but 'Takamee knew that their luck would not hold out for long; unfortunately, he was proven right. Somewhere in the fog, a horribly twisted cry pierced the silence and dozens of Combat Forms leapt forth toward the Human forces with hundreds of Infection Forms right behind. Another curse escaped 'Takamee's mandibles as he fired in sync with the humans, neutralizing what Flood he could; after all, if there were no Humans alive, why would the transport bother to hang around?

Everyone was moving at top speed now, practically sprinting through the murky water and fog toward the large structure that would serve as the pickup zone. 'Takamee could now hear the Pelican's engines whistling and roaring overhead as the pilot skilfully navigated the dense fog and foliage toward them. Just as the Humans reached the water that surrounded the base of the tower, more Flood emerged and began to attack. That, added to the fact that 'Takamee was now out of high ground, made his choice a difficult one; the Elites would have to fight side-by-side with Humans. He growled in disgust at the thought, but issued a battle cry nonetheless and charged toward the nearest Combat form, firing wildly.

David was now cursing profusely; not only had he lost most of his men to the Flood, the Master Chief had just disappeared in a flash of blinding yellow light. He ordered the Marines to form a tight circle and to fire at will. Carson fired at everything that moved, but only if it was within effective kill range of his shotgun. A Combat Form leapt through the air at him, growling angrily, and he blew it apart with a well aimed shotgun blast. Another began approaching from his left, and David aimed. The M90 kicked powerfully against his shoulder when he squeezed the trigger, but he got the desired effect; the infested Elite was lying in the murky water, quite literally in pieces.

The situation was hopeless at best, and getting worse by the minute; Flood were coming at them from every direction in a never ending torrent of snarls, bullets, flesh and gore. Round after round exploded in a bright flash of death as David fired away, blasting whatever he could in a desperate attempt to hold the Flood off until Foehammer could land. Just as things looked their bleakest, the unexpected happened; somewhere off to his nine o'clock, a war cry sounded. Only, it was that of an Elite rather than a Combat Form. For the first time in his life, David was glad to see the gargantuan

alien creatures known as Elites charging his way.

Plasma hissed past his head as several stray shots came their way, but it didn't matter; maybe now they had a chance. The Elites didn't take long to join the Marines, who gladly welcomed them into their circle of death. David began reloading his shotgun hastily as it ran out of the eight gauge shells, and pumped it. Echo-419 landed just as he finished, and the survivors clambered aboard with Carson in the rear. The Pelican ascended rapidly as Carson fired a few more rounds into the horde, blowing the chest cavity clean out of one that was stupid enough to try and jump aboard.

Exhausted and frazzled, David plopped down onto one of the seats that lined the fuselage of the Pelican drop ship. His eyes swept over the mixed cargo the ship was carrying and nearly laughed at how uncomfortable they all looked. The Elite sitting across from David was staring at him intently, as if trying to decipher a puzzle. However, he didn't have much time to ponder that as one of his Marine, Yaeger, spoke up.

"What were those things, Sarge?"

All eyes were upon him now; even those of the Elites. David decided to give in.

"They are called the Flood by the Forerunners."

David then began to explain what had happened over the last few days, going into what detail he could about the three Forerunner that had spoken to him and the small traces of data they'd told him. This seemed extremely unsettling to the quartet of Elites, who stared at him with greater disbelief than those of the Marines.

"So the prophecies are true" muttered the leader of the bunch.

"What prophecies?"

13. Prophecy

****A/N:** Everything is coming together in these final few chapters; plan on seeing one or two more for this story, and then the epilogue. Then, Aftermath gets rewritten. Also, I'm in the stages of planning another Halo series, this one dealing with well, a few loose ends that need to be tied up, but those will be written after the Charlie Company series (yes, series) is totally done.**

****Warrior:** And it only gets better.**

>Kulatu Ter'Greal: Uh sure.**

****NoneAvailible:** I do believe I was the first to journey into those, way back before Halo 2. The prophecy all will be explained about that. At present, I'm working on describing the environment and character development (which I have been lacking for years), and length will be worked on later.**

****Razzle Jazzle:** You have a point, but I really don't care what

Bungie says or the books. I'm writing this for the hell of it, so the books and a lot of the plot are going to be nill. This is really a story that I'm writing that just happens to be in the Halo universe.**

Zichalo: Welcome back! Thank you for the compliments.

The Marines of Charlie Company:

Chapter Thirteen

Prophecy

'Takamee couldn't believe it; the savior of their kind was a human? 'Impossible' he told himself quietly, 'The Gods would never allow such blasphemy! The Prophets have long said-' and that's when he stopped himself. None of the Covenant had ever been allowed to read the Holy Text of the Forerunner Artifacts. Now that he thought about it, the Prophets were the only members of the entire Covenant that had ever been allowed to speak of the Halo and their purposes. They were also the ones that declared the Humans an abomination of the universe; lowly creatures that were nothing more than excrement to be scraped from the Covenant's boot.

The humans were a danger to the Great Journey, the Prophets had said over and over, and must be destroyed. But, he recalled, their forces had never really met any real resistance other than the Demons, these so-called Spartans. Yet, here he was, sitting across from a mere human with a Holy Blade strapped to his waist; worst of all, though, was that the pathetic worm had learned how to activate and use the Blade with some degree of skill. 'Takamee had seen it for himself, and the Elite wasn't stupid; he could put two and two together to make a single, coherent sentence. All of that, plus the next sentence, shattered his faith in the Great Journey and the Prophet Hierarchy.

"They are called the Flood by the Forerunners." The Human had said.

"Soâ€|the Prophecies are true." 'Takamee muttered under his breath, still in utter disbelief at the hand that fate had dealt him.

"What prophecies?" the human queried, his facial expression showing somethingâ€|confusion? 'Takamee could not read human expressions, so he made his best guess.

The Special Forces Elite took a deep breath and collected his thoughts; a lot of explaining was going to have to go into this, especially if the tiny-brained beings called 'Humans' were to understand it. After a brief few moments of thinking, meditating and all around preparation for what he was about to say, which, to most of the Elites in his class especially, would be considered Heresy to the highest of degrees. To tell the Humans of any of their culture would bring about untold shame, but 'Takamee had no choice; he was now advisor the the Prophesized One.

"Long ago, before the Covenant, our people discovered our first glimpse of Forerunner technology and lore. In this small glimpse we had, a Prophecy was discovered; a Savior would come forth from the shadows of obscurity and a race on the brink of destruction to

prevent the Great Cataclysm/ Since then, the Sangheili have sought out this Savior and, during our search, the Prophets found us and told our people of the Great Journey. That was nearly seven hundred years ago.

Now, many of the Sangheili believe that the Prophets are the saviors, but I highly doubt it now."

During his explanation, 'Takamee could've sworn he heard 'Heretic' uttered from somewhere to his right. It couldn't have been the 'Kanamee or 'Zukamee; they would have never uttered a word about it, partly because 'Takamee was their leader and partly because they agreed with him. A good number of Elites were beginning to see through the mist that the Prophets had shrouded them in; a few had even gone so far as to break away from the Covenant and form their own Heretic Militias. In general, the Prophets ignored these militias until they grew in size and began attracting more and more of the younger Elites into them; 'Takamee had nearly been drawn into one himself.

There was the possibility that 'Zamamee could have said something, but 'Takamee sorely doubted it; most of the young ones disagreed with the slaughter of humans to begin with, but would never speak of it to their superiors. That only left the old Veteran sitting near the cockpit of their transport, who looked rather disgruntled at the entire situation. It was possible that they could be executed for engaging cooperatively with humans in any fashion; the Prophets despised the creatures that much. 'Takamee sighed and turned back to the human across from him, who was still staring at him with no muted degree of interest.

"I'd say you're right, Spli-Elite. What do your Prophets want with this damn ring, anyway? From what I've seen, the only things here are us, the Flood and the wildlife."

'Zamamee spoke before 'Takamee could even formulate a sentence.

"The Prophets seek to activate the Sacred Ring and initiate the Great Journey to Salvation for us all, or so they say. Once the Sacred Ring is activated, a Cleansing Flame will sweep through the universe, propelling all who are worthy along the Path of Salvation."

At this point, the human laughed and shook his head. His fellows all looked at him strangely, as if they thought he were crazy.

"Your Prophets don't have a fucking clue. The Halos are weapons, my friend, designed to destroy all life large enough to keep the Flood alive and kicking. According to Tier'Thal, there are a bunch of these things, all scattered among the stars. You guys are making a big mistake by trying to activate these things."

"This is outrageous! Leader, you cannot allow this worm to speak this blasphemy any further!" cried the Veteran.

"Calm yourself, you fool!" snapped 'Kanamee. "Are you old ones all so blind to the lies of our so-called Hierarchs? They send us to our deaths like Grunts to the slaughter! For what?"

The pair bickered back and forth in their native tongue, and 'Takamee was about to step in when the human across from him stood up,

strolled back to the old Veteran and slammed him against the hull of the drop ship with a force that shocked everyone. 'Kanamee sank back down into his position and all eyes were on the human, who was now holding the Crimson clad veteran in a fierce grip around his throat.

"Now, you listen hear, Split Chin. I don't give a God damn about the Prophets or you or your Great Journey or whatever. The only thing I care about is saving my people from being wiped off the face of the universe. You can either shut the hell up and sit down, or I can throw you out as Flood chow."

A growl, a curse and a snarl escaped the Veterans jaws, but he conceded and returned to his place as the Human let him go. 'Takamee knew that this had to be the one now; the only other Human that had that kind of strength was the Demon, Master Chief, and he was nowhere to be found. The Elite knew that if he were to ever return to the Covenant, he would be executed for treason, but if he stayed with the Humans there was always the possibility that an agreement of some kind could be worked out between them (the Humans had tried before), so 'Takamee decided he could try.

"What is your name, Human?"

"David Carson," stated the Marine as he sat back down in his seat and resumed his position looking out over the landscape that blurred past underneath them.

"I am 'Takamee Za'Ukamee. The two over there are 'Kanamee and 'Zamamee. Our young rookie here is 'Zalamee, and the old Veteran over there is Isca 'Fusamee."

Each Elite (with the exception of Isca) nodded as his name was called, and 'Zalamee even responded with a greeting and what would pass for a smile among their kind. David nodded in return and extended his hand toward each one as an offer of friendship; again, all of them but Isca took it in their grasp and shook hands with him. The next few moments passed in silence before the intercom clicked on and Carson was called to the front. 'Takamee followed and had to hunch over to get inside the cockpit, but managed to see what was happening. Giant columns of smoke plumed out in the distance, and the flashes of combat could be seen even from the four or so miles they were still out.

The radio in the cockpit was nearly impossible to listen to; dozens of voices were speaking all at the same time in the same panicked tone, each overlapping the other and making it impossible to discern any one shout or cry for help from another. All of the reports and requests for assistance were in consensus, however; monsters of some kind were everywhere, attacking, killing, devouring and turning soldiers at every corner in every way coming from any direction possible.

"Foehammer, get me in there."

The experienced pilot looked dumbstruck; here they were, far enough away from danger, and some psychopathic Sergeant wanted her to fly into it?

"Sergeant?"

"You heard me, Lieutenant, get me to Alpha Base. I have my reasons."

"Sorry, son, but I'm not flying my baby into the thick of combat for anyone but God himself right now."

"And I'm not leaving mine behind. If there's even the slightest chance that Cassandra's still alive, I'm going to find her. You don't have to stick around; I'll find a way out myself."

The pilot sighed, shook her head and pushed the Pelican forward toward the structure that stood above everything else, the blue-green tint now marred by pockmarks from rockets, tanks, general explosions, and overall combat. Fires could be seen clearly now, and the outlines of ghastly figures that sprinted about and exchanged fires could be recognized. 'Takamee couldn't understand what purpose this human could have for practically committing suicide, but 'Takamee would have to follow; he discovered the Young One, so it was now his job to protect him.

David pushed past the Elite and stood in the cockpit's doorway.

"All right, listen up! Alpha Base is under attack by the Flood, and there are still some of our people inside. I'm going in to look up a particular young lady, but I can't do it alone. Any volunteers?"

The hold was silent for a moment before the youngest of the Elites stood and volunteered himself, followed by the two Special Forces Elites in front of him. Not to be outdone, Yaeger, Fyodr and Franklin volunteered as well. 'Takamee set his clawed hand upon David's shoulder and nodded his service as well. The rest of the troops would stay aboard Foehammer's drop ship and find somewhere safe to hide or try and get off the ring; that would be David's suggestion. The supply cabinets built into the fuselage of the Pelican were opened and the team that would be heading in took everything they could grab.

David stuffed his pockets full of shotgun shells, added three more clips for his pistol, a bandolier of four grenades, and started to reach for assault rifle ammo, but remembered his had been broken. He cursed softly and went about checking his M90 for any damage, dirt, mud, muck or anything else that could clog the firing chamber or hammer, but found nothing; the weapon was remarkably clean. Another few minutes passed before the Pelican began to slow down and rotate, then it's descent to the ground. David leapt out and down onto the grassy gnoll, his other volunteers behind him. They were about half a klik from the Alpha's 'front door'.

"_This is as close as I can get you, Sergeant. Those things are too heavily armed for a direct insertion; sorry. Good luck to you in finding Cassandra; she's a nice gal. You're a lucky fella. Echo-419 over and out."_

The Marine laughed despite himself and waved to Foehammer after she'd taken off and was making a loop around. All jokes aside now, the small band of soldiers grimly began to make their march straight into the mouth of Hell itself.

14. Escape!

****A/N:** And nowâ€¦for the final chapter of this kind of exciting story! Well, I hope you all have enjoyed the ride. It almost saddens me that I'm finishing Charlie Company after nearly a year of working on it.**

****Zichalo:** Well, I try, Zichalo. Last year, I barely updated, but all these reviews have really kickstarted my creativity.**

****WilltheWatcher:** Well, I'm glad you've enjoyed it!**

****NoneAvailible:** It's finishedâ€¦all that's left is the Epilogue.**

****Dairokkan:** That would take all the fun out of this, wouldn't it?**

****Lecter42:** Hehâ€¦I've been in overdrive lately. A sniper rifle could operate with half the barrel, just not as accurately.**

****Warior:** Like gravyâ€¦mmmâ€¦gravyâ€¦**

****THE MARINES OF CHARLIE COMPANY****

****CHAPTER 14:****

****Escape!****

Cassandra couldn't believe it; Alpha Base was being overrun by hundreds, if not thousands, of horrible monsters. The M6D kicked against the palm of her hand as she emptied the clip at the wall that seemed to be moving toward her. They consisted mainly of Covenant looking creatures, but a few human-like forms were mixed into the snarling, writhing mass. The pistol ran dry with an aggravating _click click click_, and Cassandra frantically went about reloading the small weapon as the current clip was ejected and clattered on the ground. She slapped the next clip in and chambered a round, but it all seemed too slow; they were nearly on top of her now. Cassandra backpedaled and fired wildly; she didn't need to aim because the things were clustered so closely together that every round would hit something.

The bullets only seemed to be a nuisance to the sickly green creatures and they stumbled, leapt and crawled toward her as the clip ran dry again. Cassandra ejected it, fished around in her pocket, located her final clip of ammo and slipped it in to the receiver. A round was chambered and aim was taken, but it was unneeded; from out of nowhere, a plasma grenade arced through the air and landed in the midst of the creatures. It detonated with a loud _bang_ and disintegrated the creatures closest to it and severely burned the others.

Worried, Cassandra turned on her heel and searched, but found nothing until she looked down. A Grunt stood behind her, armed with a Plasma Rifle it had probably taken off of a fallen Elite. The weapon looked strange in the Grunt's diminutive hands and Cassandra nearly laughed. It turned its head slightly to one side, like a confused dog trying

to figure out what a strange object or behavior was or meant. Cassandra sighed and knelt down next to it.

"Can you speak English?" she asked.

"Me speak little English. Me understand lots, but no speak well."

She nodded. "Okay, little guy, you're going to come with me. We're getting out of here. My name is Cassandra, but you can call my Sally if it's easier."

"Me Kizkit. We go fast."

Cassandra nodded and observed their surroundings, trying to get her bearings; they were around the improvised barracks, which meant the landing platforms that had been set up were not too far away. Altogether, Cassandra was fairly inexperienced at close quarters combat on the ground or infantry fighting as a whole; she was a pilot and belonged in the skies. Despite this, she crept along, pistol clutched tightly in her white-knuckled near death grip as the little Grunt followed behind her and whimpered softly as they neared the door that would lead them through a long corridor that was probably crawling with Flood.

The pilot swallowed the lump that had formed in her throat, pressed her back against the wall and inhaled deeply several times to calm herself. After a moment of hesitation, she stepped toward the door and brought her pistol to bear, but found nothing on the other side; no Flood, no blood, no bodies—nothing. Cassandra nearly sighed in relief, but began rationalizing at the same time. The Flood had been in every hall and every corridor before this one, so why was this particular corridor empty? She shoved those thoughts aside and proceeded extremely cautiously across the threshold and into the hall and watched every direction possible for any signs of movement. Nothing.

Cassandra turned left at the end of the corridor and continued on toward the hangar; she could now hear the sounds of a battle raging from not too far away. She pressed onward with renewed hope of finding someone, anyone or anything, that wasn't one of the horrendous creatures that swarmed everywhere. Cassandra made a sprint for the door that was straight ahead of her and burst through, right into the thick of a huge battle; directly ahead of her were dozens of Flood combat forms and beyond them was a mishmash of beings, both Humans and Covenant. Before she could even react, Cassandra heard the fizz and felt the heat of a Plasma Grenade rush past her head and saw it land in the midst of the Flood, who seemed not to notice; they were too busy firing at the survivors that had made a makeshift barricade out of supply crates, crashed Warthogs and other various pieces of equipment.

The grenade detonated with a resounding explosion and disintegrated the combat forms closest to it and severely burned the others. Cassandra was dumbstruck by the sights around her; blood, bodies, weapons, Flood—it was all so overwhelming that her mind just shut down; she couldn't move despite the fact that Cassandra could hear the little Grunt yapping in her ear and tugging on her shirt, telling her to move. Another few precious moments passed before Cassandra's constant mental shouting at herself to move and Kizkit's yapping

finally snapped her out of her daze and got her muscles to work again. Cassandra and Kizkit made a mad dash for the barricade, firing wildly and blindly at the Flood that had survived the blast, and more were now coming through the door she had just exited and were gaining rapidly. Kizkit unhooked another grenade from his belt, activated it and tossed it behind them and caused the Flood to think twice about charging them; it wasn't much, but the Grunt had bought them the time they needed.

Cassandra leapt over the barricade without too much trouble, given her athletic build, but Kizkit couldn't make it; his stubby arms and legs were too clumsy to climb over the crates. Frightened, the little Grunt began to yap loudly, still trying to paw it's way over a to joining it's comrades. Cassandra and another Marine reached across and hoisted the little Grunt over, who immediately latched onto her leg.

"Me thought you leave me behind!" he bawled.

The pilot grinned and turned her head toward the Marine that had aided her with Kizkit.

"Thank you, Corporal."

"Not a problem, ma'am." He replied, his voice thick with a southern accent. The Corporal offered her a shotgun that he had slung over his shoulder. "You know how to use one of these?"

She nodded and took the shotgun gratefully and the majority of the shotgun shells the soldier had on him; the Marine had an MA5B and more ammo than he could ever need, he'd said. Cassandra watched the Marine head farther down the barricade to reinforce a weakened position. From what Cassandra could tell, there were five or six dozen survivors and four times that many flood. The booming sounds of shotguns and assault rifles mixed and muddled with the strange sound of plasma rifles and the like; for the first time, both types of weapons were pointed at a common enemy.

* * *

>David let loose a cry as he brought the butt of the M90 down into the fleshy chest of a combat form. Presently, the small band of troopers was fighting through the mess hall. It was full to the brim with Combat Forms and Infection Forms, and Yaegar had already gone down. Fyodr was wounded badly and Franklin was covering him with his shotgun. David was back-to-back with 'Takamee, fending off a massive wave of attackers. A combat form that had just leapt into the air was torn apart with one simple squeeze of the M90's trigger. It landed at David's feet and writhed there before all life left it.<p><p>

Once they had been beaten back far enough, David unstrapped his fourth and final grenade, primed it and lobbed it into their midst and blew most of them to whatever hell they'd crawled from. Whatever was left was quickly disposed of by the Elites in the room, and David moved to check on his squadmates. Fyodr was barely alive; several wounds in his chest were bleeding profusely and a trio of scars ran along the side of his face. David knelt next to him on the blood stained floor.

"Hey, buddy." David said quietly.

Fyodr coughed raspily and grinned. "Looks likeâ€|this is it, Comrade."

"Yeahâ€|it does."

"Here," Fyodr began as he offered his tags up to David, "take themâ€|leave me here. I'm no good to you now, Sergeant."

Carson frowned and took the tags. "I'm not leaving you behind, whether you like it or not. Franklin, gimme a hand."

The young private nodded and took Fyodr by the shoulders, stood him up, and carried the older Marine on his back. David stood, clenching the tags in his hand angrily, and made his way to the front of the group. He stuffed them in his pocket with the rest of his now 'collection' and stalked closer to the door that led toward the barracks, foregoing the M90 in favor of his energy sword. The door opened as it sensed his presence and the sword activated with a sharp crackle. He was greeted on the other side by a rather unhappy Combat Form. Before it realized it was there, however, he cleaved it in half with the Energy Sword and stalked across the door, repeating the process on any that came near him.

Slightly stunned, the surviving Marine and four Elites followed behind, carefully watching for anything that David may have missed; Franklin noticed that it wasn't much and also realized he was fairly defenseless while carrying his dying comrade on his back. Unphased, he continued onward with his comrades and tried to stay as close as he could. Up ahead, David had disemboweled another Combat form and stalked through the door directly ahead of them; combat was ringing loudly just behind it. A grin spread across his lips as he neared the door and tightened his grip on the energy sword that hummed softly in his right hand. Fighting meant survivors, and survivors meant there was still a chance to find Cassandra and get her out of this hellhole.

David stepped within range of the doors sensors and heard the gears beginning to click, whirr and hum softlyâ€|but nothing happened; the door had been damaged by some sort of explosive. He kicked the door in a frustrated mannerâ€|and the door still wouldn't budge. David began to feel defeated, but realized he had the universe's most powerful natural weapon at his disposal; pure, unbridled plasma energy focused to it's most perfect stateâ€|and it was right there in his hand. He brought the sword down diagonally from the top right corner of the door all the way down to the floor opposite that corner in one smooth motion. For a second, nothing happened. Then, with a simple nudge, the door fell outward with a resounding 'clang' that seemed to have caught the attention of everyone and everything on the other side.

Without hesitation or a second thought, David charged headlong into the massive horde in front of him, slicing, whirling and just plain cutting his way through, the Elites and Franklin right behind him. The Flood were apparently confuse by this new occurance and didn't seem to know which way to attack; there were enemies to the front and now to the rear. David plunged the humming blade into the chest cavity of one Combat Form, yanked his arm sideways and brought it down on another, cleanly bisecting it. Truthfully, David didn't know where this knowledge of CQC (**C**lose **Q**uarters **C**ombat) had

come from; he'd never handled a blade in his life, yet this came naturally to him. David realized this upon lopping the head off of one Combat Form, then jamming the blade right through the chest of another.

David ducked under a rather powerful swipe of a combat form, rolled to the side and swept upward with the blade, bisecting yet another Flood, but then realized the worst; the energy sword had run out of power and fizzled out. He clipped the cylinder back onto his belt and unslung the M90 from across his back. David pumped it once to chamber a round, dropped to one knee and fired as Franklin made his way through the fray with the wounded Fyodr across his back. David backpedaled and kept firing in an attempt to cover the pair as they neared the makeshift barricade and sidestepped another swipe from a combat form. He shoved the barrel of the shotgun flat up against the Combat Form's side and squeezed the trigger. The force of the blast was so powerful that it flung the 'body' a good fifteen feet before it tumbled to the ground with most of it's torso missing.

'Takamee and his Elites were over the barricade with Franklin and Fyodr before David even turned around. He sprinted over to the barricade, planted his hand on a crate and vaulted over with relative ease and was immediately greeted with a near-suffocating hug of female origin. David looked down and saw Cassandra smiling up at him.

"Thank God you're here, David. When we lost contact with the Captainâ€¦"

"Yeahâ€¦I know. Look, we can talk about this later; right now, I just want to survive."

Cassandra nodded and worked her way back to her original position. Pelicans were beginning to arrive to evacuate the survivors; all thirty five of them. The officer in command, a Lieutenant by the name of Jackson, gave the order to evacuate the wounded and medical officers that were left first. That was logical, given their current situation, and carried out immediately. David helped hoist the last of the wounded men, a female with a bad chest wound, up into the rear of the Pelican. Only one other person, a medic, was able to squeeze inside the cramped compartment; the rest was filled with wounded men and women. Carson returned to the barricade and unslung his shotgun as another wave of Flood approached.

"Stay calm!" he shouted. "Pick your targets! Shotguns, hold your fire until they're within range! Conserve your ammo; we don't know how long we're gonna be here."

Everyone seemed to agree with him (at least to some extent, anyway) and waited until the Flood were within effective killing range before they opened fire. Assault Rifles and Plasma Rifles erupted on both sides of him, spewing hot lead and sheer energy into the horde of pale yellow-green that was rapidly approaching them. Grenades thundered as they detonated and scattered dozens of the creatures at a time in every direction, sending some slamming into the walls and ceiling and some into others, causing massive pileups which made for even easier targets. Infection forms popped by the dozen as they were either crushed by their falling counterparts or torn apart by hostile fire. David set his sights on what appeared to be leading the charge; an Elite Combat Form that was wielding an Energy Sword and making a

bee line straight for him. It snarled and leapt into the air with a howl that was cut as both legs and part of the torso were torn away by his M90. The creature landed well short of the barricade and was promptly trampled by it's charging comrades.

"Shotguns, open fire!" David shouted.

On cue, dozens of deafening booms from shotguns echoed all around him, tearing arms and legs and blowing torsos apart. A marine on David's left flung a frag grenade into the midst of the Flood, who immediately began to scatter. Fourteen or fifteen of them were caught into the blast and flung in all directions. One, however, made it through and leapt into the air straight toward David, who was in the middle of reloading the shotgun. By the time he took notice, it was too late; the creature was coming down on him and he barely had enough time to pump the shotgun before he felt the thing's crushing weight on his chest. David grimaced and grunted as combination of the creature's weight combined with his own slammed into the ground. His shotgun slid out of his unclenched hand and across the floor, just out of arm's reach. Typical.

The Combat Form made a swipe at David's head, but he managed to block the blow with his arm and cried out as the sharp tentacles cut through his uniform and into the flesh that lay underneath. It snarled viciously and raised it's right arm high above it's head, but suddenly began to convulse violently. Smoke rose from it's back and it collapsed, revealing one very unhappy looking Elite standing with two plasma rifles gripped tightly in it's claws. David soon recognized this Elite as 'Takamee and nodded his thanks, then found his shotgun and resumed his position at the line. The battle continued for another little while before another Pelican came in and picked up the second batch of troops, leaving a dozen or so combined Elites, Marines and Grunts to hold their own until a final Pelican could arrive.

David had since bandaged the wound on his forearm and was standing at the head of the barricade with the Lieutenant. Hundreds of Combat Forms lay stretched out, in pieces or in piles atop each other.

"If another attack like that comesâ€¦I don't think we stand a chance." Jackson had commented glumly.

"Oh, come on, El-Tee." David replied, "It won't be long before the next Pelican gets here. We'll be fine; you'll see."

David knew that low morale, especially among officers, could lead to doom for the entire unit; that had been proven both in his personal past engagements and engagements throughout history, on Earth and otherwise. If the men who were supposed to lead suffered a drop in morale, that would crush what little the men they were leading had left; everyone would lose the will to fight and just accept the 'inevitable'. That was something that Sergeant Carson was determined not to allow to happen.

"Lieutenant, we should close in the barricade; we're stretched too thin with the troops we've got left."

"Yesâ€¦yes, you're right. Sergeant, get everyone closed in; I want this barricade cut in fourth. Only enough room for us to move freely and have the Pelican land."

"Sir, yes sir!" David replied with a sharp salute before doing an about face and shouting the aforementioned orders.

He then moved and began to shuffle crates, supplies and help drag wrecked vehicles in position. Even though his physical body was on task, his mind was elsewhere; why were the Flood not attacking them? They were vulnerable, not only because of their numbers but their actions, too; they were all working hastily to prepare the barricade for another attack, so it would have been easy to catch the survivors off guard and easily overwhelm them—and, still, nothing came. That realization had apparently struck most of the surviving fighters, including Cassandra, 'Takamee and his team. Everyone began to move faster and the barricade was quickly finished in the proper fashion. All that was left to do after that was wait.

David then had a chance to observe those around him; all looked tired, haggard and like they'd seen more ghosts than Scooby-Doo in a haunted house. Most were covered in blood or wearing tattered uniforms—or both. Cassandra was talking to a pair of young Marines, both of whom were in the worst state out of any of them. One had a gash along the side of his face that had stopped bleeding, but only recently; he refused to leave aboard either the first or second Pelican because he wanted to stay behind and help as long as he could. His friend was in better shape, but only by a little; her uniform was cut to ribbons and little scratches and bruises lined her arms. One of her pants legs was missing below the knee and the reason why was obvious; a bandage wound around her calf up to her knee and was stained a dark crimson.

The marine turned away and faced toward the doorway that the Flood persistently poured through. He leaned on a crate in front of him and allowed the shotgun to hang loosely from his left hand at his side. The past week's events came to him almost at once, from the initial landing upon Halo to the first encounter with the Forerunners and now to yesterday—he shuddered visibly and rubbed his face at the memories; images of his friends would be burned into his mind for the rest of his life. A mental scar that would forever remind him of the days he spent in this hellish place fighting for not only his life, but for the lives of everyone around him. Just as David felt the tears welling up in his eyes, the radio he had on his waist clicked on.

"_This is Bravo-Two-Six-Six to Alpha Base! Is anybody in there receiving me? Over._"

"Roger that, Bravo-Two-Six-Six. This is Sergeant David Carson; I've got survivors here and we need immediate extraction. Over." David heard the pilot sigh in relief.

"_Thank God. I thought I was coming back here for nothing. Okay, Sergeant, I'm in the pipe five-by-five. ETA, three minutes. Bravo-Two-Six-Six over and out._"

David grinned and clicked the radio off.

"Hey, El-Tee! Extraction's coming in three minutes!" David called. Several heads perked up from where they were, and whoops of joy erupted from the six or seven Marines that were with David; they weren't being left behind after all. However, the nagging feeling

that the Flood were up to something still persisted in the back of his mind. That feeling was realized as the Pelican touched down.

In a flash, hundreds of Combat Forms poured through the doorway David had used to enter the improvised hangar and were making a mad dash for the Pelican. 'So this was their plan all along.' He realized bitterly.

"Get aboard the Pelican! Now!" he shouted to his comrades, none of whom needed be told twice.

Everyone scrambled for the ship and clambered aboard at a frantic pace spurred on by fear. David, who was the closest to the door and front of the barricade, was walking backward and firing the shotgun madly into the Flood to try and buy the others some time to escape. However, the shotgun clicked dry far too quickly, and he dropped the spent and useless weapon to the ground. He turned on his heel and sprinted as quickly as he could the mere thirty feet to the waiting drop ship, gripped a hand hold and began to hoist himself aboard when a cry of 'Behind you!' came from inside the hold. David turned in time to see an Infection form latch onto his chest as the Pelican ascended. He could feel the creature burrowing into his chest cavity and cried out in agony. However, it suddenly stopped and David blacked out.

15. Bad Day Gets Worse

****A/N:** Well, I've finally made up my mind; I'm not going to divide Charlie Company up into separate stories, but write them all in the same thing that way people know what's going on and can read it all at the same time!******

****Warrior:** I'll take that as an "I enjoyed this."******

****WilltheWatcher:** Ohh and it will only get better.******

****Zichalo:** Thank ya thank ya.******

****Lecter42:** Oh, I did. I did.******

****Dairokkan:** Two words; ass-kicking.******

****HaloObsessed1010:** Actually, not all of them agreed; remember, Isca didn't like it at all.******

****NoneAvailible:** Heee all I have to say to that is ******

****MyHumps:** Whatcha gon' do with all that junk? Sorry I couldn't help it. Thanks for reviewing.******

****Linkmaster2832:** Here you go!******

****Firebendingguy:** Uh sure!******

****Capt.ShaneSchofield:** Thanks a lot!******

****At this time,** I would like to ask a favor of anyone who reads this; I'd like for all of you to begin leaving reviews so that I know what kind of following Charlie Company has and they get my lazy ass to

write faster.**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Book Two****

****Aftermath****

The greatest threat known to humankind is closing on Earth; more than half a dozen alien races have their minds on nothing more than man's destruction. Reach, the UNSC's greatest port and last line of defense, fell no more than a week ago to the Covenant's unceasing blitzkrieg across its colonies. Only one ship, the Pillar of Autumn, managed to escape Reach as the Covenant ships solidified the small planet's atmosphere and killed hundreds of thousands of troops. Aboard the Pillar of Autumn was a skeleton crew of Marines, Crewmen, the shipboard AI named Cortana and Captain Keyes. All in all, they numbered somewhere in the hundreds in the beginning, and even fewer when they landed on Halo.

The Covenant, highly aggravated by these humans, launched hundreds of ground teams against the human survivors on Halo and would have wiped them out had the Master Chief not also been aboard the Autumn. With his help, the Autumn's crew managed to survive and fight battle after battle against the Covenant, striking at vital positions only to sink back into Halo's lush grasslands and forests. Among these heroes of this futuristic United Nations was a single soldier, an average Joe if you will, named David Carson. Until Halo, his fate was the same as any other soldier's; obscurity. However, the Forerunner changed the course of his life forever.

They warned him of a great evil that lay lurking below the ring, waiting for a being uncanny enough to unleash it. The Covenant managed to do so once, and the human Captain, Jacob Keyes, did so again. In a flash, the Autumn's forces were not fighting two enemies, but one; the Covenant troops, for the most part, sided with the humans as a matter of survival. Wave after wave of the Flood swept over Halo, engulfing any and all in its path, turning once beautiful creatures into horrible, twisted shells of their former selves.

Unbeknownst to David and his team, the Master Chief was still alive as they headed back to Alpha Base to try and rescue any survivors. Upon arrival, Echo-419 was called away to another extraction at the Pillar of Autumn's crash site, leaving David, three Marines and four Elites to fend for themselves as they fought through the Flood-infested Alpha Base in their search for anyone left alive. One marine, Yaegar, died early on in the fighting and Fyodr was badly wounded, but Franklin, the third Marine, made it through unscathed. The fighting in Alpha Base was close quarters and fierce, but the determined soldiers made it through to the crew's improvised landing pads. Several waves of Flood attacked afterward and nearly overran the survivors, but a single Pelican, Bravo-266, arrived just in time and evacuated the mixed Covenant and Human survivors.

However, an Infection form latched itself to David just as the pelican lifted offâ€¦|

'Takamee snarled loudly as the Infection form popped in his steel-hard grasp. Fleeshy bits of the creature rained down for a

second, then ceased as the last remains settled on the floor next to the now-still Marine that he was protecting. A hole had been bored in the Human's chest cavity where the Parasite had latched itself to him, and 'Takamee watched as the female began to bandage the wound that was still pumping out blood. Amazingly enough, though, the wound had begun to heal already.

"Zamamee, look." 'Takamee said, pointing down to the human on the floor.

He watched as the younger turned from the Elite he had been talking to and stared in awe; no wound would heal as quickly as this one among any creature either had ever seen.

"This isâ€|this is unprecedented. How is that possible?"

No one seemed to have an answer, so no one spoke. Instead, many of the passengers in the cramped compartment gathered around their wounded comrade and the woman at his side and watched as the blood indeed ceased flowing from the wound and it began to heal at a rapid pace. A few gasps and mutters of 'amazing' filtered through the small crowd of observers as the marine that lay before them began to stir slowly. 'Takamee could hear David groan softly as consciousness returned to the human that lay on the cold floor and as he tried to regain his bearings. The Elite watched his comrade slowly sit up and glance around at the faces of beings around him.

"What the Hell are you all looking at?"

David was confused; why was everyone here staring at him like they'd just seen a ghost or God or something of that sort? It was then that he remembered; that little Flood had latched himself onto himâ€|he could still feel the tentacles and digits of the creatures writhing about in his chest cavity. Then, there was the sharp pain in his back before everything stoppedâ€|had he been infected? Was he going to turn in to one of those things? David shuddered quite violently at the thought, and many of the beings around him shrank back slightly.

"What happened? Where am I?" he asked, trying to remember further past the Flood latching on to him, but there was nothing but a big blank.

The Lieutenant began explaining everything he could, from the time the Flood attacked Alpha Base to the battles before and after David and his troops had arrived and after that. David noticed that the Lieutenant hesitated for a moment when he came upon when Carson was attacked by the Infection form and paused for a moment, as if he was searching for the proper way to explain it. After a moment or two, he found the correct words and explained that after that, Bravo-266 made a run for the atmosphere and space. Not too long after they exited the atmosphere, there was a massive explosion that originated around the _Pillar of Autumn_'s crash site and only one vehicle, a Longsword fighter, escaped.

Jackson then went on to say that the Pelican pilot, Warhammer had since cut the Pelican's engines to save fuel and that they were now drifting toward the world that Halo orbited around. They had discovered that the planet was called 'Threshold' and that several hundred Covenant signals were coming from a small structure built

there and hanging from some kind of extremely thick cable. 'Takamee was the only Elite that recognized the signals and identified them as Heretics; Covenant Rebels that were hunted like the Humans were. How the Covenant had missed these was beyond the Special Forces Elite, but he also knew that they could find aid there.

David took in all this information and mulled the possibilities over in his mind; these Heretics could offer the tired soldiers aid—but, again, they could just blast them out of the sky before they had a chance to make a call for assistance. He tapped his fingers softly on the titanium flooring as he thought, then pushed himself to his feet after a moment or two of thinking. David turned toward the cockpit and ducked through the door.

"How far away are we, Foehammer?"

"Six—seven hundred kilometers from the atmosphere and then another four or five hundred inlet to the structure."

David grunted thoughtfully and stepped across so that his entire body was in the cockpit and pulled himself in to the comfortable co-pilot's seat right next to the pilot.

"What's our ETA to the atmosphere?"

"At current speed," the black pilot began, "twenty minutes. We've only got enough fuel left for an hour or two of full-out burn."

"All right, this is what I want you to do. Use whatever power you can to boost the transmitter and get a message down to those Heretics. After that, get us a bit more speed; I don't want to stick around out here if the whole God damn Covenant fleet shows up."

Foehammer nodded as David stood and headed back into the interior compartment of the Pelican. He began systematically going through the weapons storage lockers, looking for anything that might be of use to the survivors in case things got rough. After several minutes, he took stock of the situation; four spare MA5Bs, seven pistols, eight extra clips for each, a half dozen fragmentation grenades and whatever else the Covenant on the ship and the Marines had on them. David sighed and shook his head; if trouble were to arise, they'd be in deep. There was no medical equipment aboard this particular Pelican (it had probably been used either on him or previous occupants), and ammo was near none.

So far, the last two weeks had been the worst of David's life and were looking to spiral even further downhill.

16. Contact

****A/N:** Well, looks like I've got some 'splaining to do.**

****Boarder:** Danke, comrade, danke. Oh, it will get oh so much better.**

****Madhatter577:** No. He was aboard Foehammer's Pelican when she was shot down.**

****Lecter42:** You are correct, sir. On both accounts. I may have typed

'Foehammer' when I meant 'Warhammer', who is her younger brother.**

Capt.ShaneSchofield: I will.

HalosObsessed1010: And more will soon follow.

**Warrior: I already didâ€|and don't worry about the self promotion.
â€|Laughs- I don't mindâ€|and thanks for the
ads.**

**WilltheWatcher: Yesâ€|they are in a bit of a tight spot,
eh?**

**In other general news, my apologies for the delay. Writer's block
again, but I have found my direction!**

The Marines of Charlie Company

Book II

Aftermath

Chapter Two:

Contact

As the Pelican headed toward Harvest, David gave a short briefing to the troops holed up in the back. He told them of the situation and the plan that had just begun formulating in the back of his mind. While Warhammer was making contact with the Heretics, there was really nothing that all of them could do other than cross their fingers and pray that the ex-Covenant wouldn't just decide to vaporize them before they had a chance to do anything or give their intentions. Thankfully, that didn't happen and the passengers could feel the Pelican entering the atmosphere as David spoke.

"Okay, here's the plan. 'Takamee, 'Zamamee, Franklin and Jackson are with me. We're going to try and negotiate something with these Heretics. The rest of you stay here and await my orders. Once the away team is off the Pelican, Warhammer is going to circle in orbit around the facility until we can be sure that these guys are on the level, then either hightail it out of here, or come in for a landing."

Carson could see heads bobbing in nods as he finished speaking, then took a seat next to Lieutenant Jackson who was in the process of cleaning the Battle Rifle that was in pieces on his lap. For Marines, this was a bit of a past time while waiting for either orders or transport to a combat zone. Each man would have to learn how to disassemble, clean and reassemble a weapon quickly and without a second thought or mistake during basic training and did so to pass the time. David reached behind his head, opened the single cabinet where the few boxes of ammunition had been stored, extracted one of the boxes and fished through his pockets for empty magazines. He set the box of ammo beside him and began to slowly load the magazines one round at a time, which was a time consuming process but well worth it; in all actuality, David really preferred loading the magazines himself because he could be sure that a round or two wouldn't be loaded incorrectly and either cause an assault rifle to backfire or

jam in the middle of a firefight.

After that process was completed, he stashed all five magazines in various pockets on his person and set the Assault Rifle there at his side. Jackson had apparently taken notice of the strange cylinder at his hip and asked David what it was. With a grin, the Marine Sergeant unclipped the small object and depressed the trigger located at the very center and startled several of the soldiers that had been asleep with a loud crackle as the blade activated. David could see the raw energy of the weapon as sparks danced between the two prongs of plasma and feel the heat that the weapon gave off. He offered it to the Lieutenant, who carefully accepted it from him and looked the blade over and really had the facial expression of a kid in a candy store before handing it back to David, who deactivated it with another depression of the handle and clipped it back on his belt.

Nobody was speaking, as David noticed, as the Heretic facility came closer and closer to them. Suddenly, a thought crossed the Sergeant's mind and he immediately made for the cockpit, opened the door and leaned inside. Warhammer looked like he was concentrating solely on flying, which was understandable; the instruments weren't working and a storm was flinging gasses in every possible direction and obscuring the view of whatever was out there almost entirely.

"Warhammer, I need you to run an atmospheric scan; I need you to make sure we can breathe this stuff."

"All rightâ€¦it'll take a few minutes, though. Man, this would be _so_ much easier with Cortana's helpâ€¦" Warhammer muttered in response as he tapped a series of buttons in front of him. Tense minutes passed before the results came back positive; there was just enough oxygen in the atmosphere to make it breathable and nothing toxic out there. If there was, it wasn't in large enough amounts to do any damage. Just another thing to strike off the list of stuff that could possibly kill them out in the middle of nowhere.

Just as David turned to exit the cockpit, Warhammer called back to him that he could see the facility and it looked like a welcoming party had been sent out to either greet them or murder them before anyone had a chance to move. The Sergeant groaned outwardly and massaged his temples; a headache was developing rather quickly from the seemingly deteriorating situation. Now the fatigue was truly beginning to catch up to David; every inch of his body ached in more ways than he thought possible and his muscles were burning from the sheer amount of strain they had been put through as of late. Despite the pain, David had to continue onward and fight through it; he wasn't just going to sit around and let someone else do his work for him. Jackson was a capable leader from what Carson had seen, but David preferred to do things himself.

Another moment passed before he made his way back to the place beside the Lieutenant and sat down after retrieving his Assault Rifle. Jackson turned his head toward David and appeared to be looking him over, or so David thought. David's stomach lurched as the Pelican slowed to land at a site the Heretic forces had designated and, from what David could gather, there wasn't much communication occurring between the drop ship and the Heretics other than that one transmissionâ€¦and a good many of them did _not_ sound happy about having humans around, and David really couldn't blame them; a lot of

the Marines didn't trust 'Takamee and his merry little band all that much either, so the feeling was most definitely mutual between the two sides.

"Lieutenant, do you have any experiences with diplomacy?"

"A bit. You know, soothing the ruffled feathers of a Captain or two here and there. Need me to talk to these guys for you, Sergeant?"

"Unfortunately, yes. I've not had too many experiences with this type of thing and, frankly, I don't feel like putting up with all the bull that's bound to go on."

"I can understand that, Sergeant. I'll see what I can do." The Lieutenant replied with a reassuring smile as the Pelican turned and began its descent toward the ground. Every Marine readied their weapons, even though most of them wouldn't be going—just in case. The Pelican touched down and the away team clambered out, each and every move they made watched by a dozen Heretic Elites, all led by one enormously tall one, who 'Takamee apparently knew.

"'Isca—"

David glanced between the two Elites tiredly with some questions in need of asking, but decided to let them go for now; questioning could possibly lead to trouble on account of him being nothing more than a mere human—that and he didn't want to possibly give off the image of being stupid. 'Takamee seemed to pick up on this and began to elaborate. The pair of them had once been a part of the same Special Forces unit assigned to hunting down and eliminating the Heretic units that had begun popping up all over the place. After a while, though, 'Isca began to see things from the Heretics' point of view and left the Special Forces unit they were assigned to—then abandoned the Covenant all together. He had tried to convince 'Takamee to go with him, but the latter would have nothing to do with it—until now.

The Sergeant took all of this information in and quietly signaled for the two other Marines to be ready for trouble, and they informed 'Zalamee—equally as quietly. 'Takamee and 'Isca both stepped forward, each equally cautious of the other, and shook hands—er—claws—or whatever counted for hands among their kind.

"What brings you here of all places, old friend, with these humans?" 'Isca queried.

"I have seen the light, 'Isca. You were right—the Prophets have blinded our brothers and fathers. These humans—they showed me the truth of what they are truly capable of and why the Prophets wish them destroyed. They are the key, 'Isca, to ending the Prophets' reign. Especially this one." 'Takamee pointed to David, who shifted a bit uncomfortably as 'Isca looked him over.

"What makes him so special? He is no demon."

"That is the beauty of it," 'Takamee replied, "The Prophets will not see such a human as a threat, yet he not only wields a Holy Blade

with considerable skill, but also survived the Flood when so many others fell before their might."

'Isca seemed to smileâ€¦if that's what he was doing by clicking his upper mandibles. The Heretic leader turned without another word and waved for the small group to follow him, which they did without further question but not without some hesitation; after all, it could be a trap. David observed around them; wind howled in his ears and whipped against the bits of flesh that his uniform and armor left exposed (mainly his face and hands) on the upper levels, and below them was a twisting array of catwalks, maintenance ways and too many other walkways, highways and byways to count or even speculate on where they went to and came from. A few troops and researches could barely be seen, but were there going about whatever business they needed to attend to. Some were hefting large grey and green cylindrical canisters and others were escorting said canisters and armed to the teeth. David made a note to ask about those later.

Around them specifically, David heard Lieutenant Jackson strike up a conversation with one of the Heretics that was escorting them to their destination about their operations here and somesuch while 'Zalamee and Franklin remained quiet and watched for any signs of danger, though the Heretics seemed to be on the level and relatively friendly toward these outsiders. A good sign for them, at the very least. Not too much walking occurred before they arrived at their destination, which was a fairly vacant meeting room with some rather large chairs and a rectangular table in the center, all of which were greyâ€¦well against the Covenant grain of royal purple. Each member of the party took a seat, with 'Isca at the head of the table and 'Takamee at the other. The three humans sat together on the right side with 'Zalamee and the Heretics took the left.

For a few moments, no one spokeâ€¦until 'Isca piped up.

"So, how did these Humans get here?"

"To be honest, 'Isca, I'm not entirely sure."

It was Jackson's turn to speak. The Lieutenant went into the Fall of Reach, a battle that occurred only seven days ago but felt like years past, and what happened afterward in excruciating detail. After that was their battle on board the Pillar of Autumn (a ship that David sorely missed) and theâ€¦landings on Halo, for the lack of a better word. There was a pause for a moment or two as Jackson collected his thoughts and tried to pull together what seemed to be a blur and finished up the tale of their 'adventures' on Halo, with Franklin tossing his two cents in there every now and then. The whole thing seemed to entertain 'Isca and the heretics greatly, because they kept muttering to each other throughout, while David said nothing and was content with just sitting and watching; like he said before, diplomacy was not his strong point. Truthfully, he was more suited to squeezing a trigger than anything else.

After the story was finished, 'Isca nodded and seemed to look the three humans over and paused on David for a short while.

"You, Human. I have not heard you speak yet. Let me hear your story."

"I'm not a very good talker, 'Iscaâ€|besides, I'd rather not share my side of the story for personal reasons."

Thankfully, the Elite seemed to understand and turned his attention back to Lieutenant Jackson. The two of them quickly began speaking, each asking the other various questions about culture and all that nonsense, burning up time that could have been spent doing something usefulâ€|but that was the reason David was a soldier and not a politician; he preferred to cut through the BS and straight to the point because he got enough of the runaround from the pencil pushers at command. Another few minutes passed before they got to the point of the issue; how the Humans were getting off this rock and back to Earth.

"You are in luck, Humans." 'Isca said. "We have but one ship here in fairly decent order we can give you, but only if you can bring help back to us here. The Prophets will surely begin searching this system after Halo's destruction and we do not have the strength to fight them off. If you can reach your homeworld and acquire some assistance for us, we can aid you in your battle against the Prophets."

That was good newsâ€|things were finally starting to look up.

17. The FloodAgain?

****A/N: Okay, and here we go again! Thanks to all my reviewers. You guys are great, you really are.****

****Human KillerX: Yes, I did at one point. That has since passed because I am in a Machinima series called Outpost: Backwash. Check the trailer out.****

****Try and guess who I play.****

****TheMadhatter577: Vanquished, it has beenâ€|well, for the time being, anyway. Actually, that chapter was about the average length, if not longer, than most of the othersâ€|hmm.****

****Cpt.ShaneSchofield: Yes, by 'Assault Rifle' I mean MA5B. I'm glad you like the chapter; it was a bitch to write.****

****Linkmaster2832: Lookin on u-upâ€|doo dee do. You'll have to wait and find out. ****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Book II****

****Aftermath****

****Chapter Three:****

****The Floodâ€|Again?****

With the arrangements set, all they would have to do is wait until a crew could be put together for the _Ancient _Fury and they did for a few daysâ€|or would have had David not been called away from the rest of his soldiers by 'Isca. The Elite apparently wanted to talk about

the Flood or something of that order; David really didn't get most of the story because he and Cassandra had been half-asleep at the time. So, the Marine had been forced to leave her behind (she and Warhammer needed to do some maintenance on their rather battered Pelican anyway) and head out alone, with only a little Grunt to guide him. The further inside the compound they got, the darker the atmosphere becameâ€|not to mention the stench of infected flesh.

The room David had been led to was a large antechamber with a large hologram of the Heretic station being projected by a small pedestal on the floor. Several large parts of the station were marked bright red by the projector with the word '**INFESTATION**' plastered over them in dark black letters. Though David thought he had a feeling as to where this was going to go, he stood there and waited, just kind of eyeing everything around him. This particular room had a massively high ceiling, maybe sixty or seventy feet or so, but was relatively small in width compared to itâ€|probably twenty by fifteen. On either side of where David stood were spiraling ramps that led upward to a series of levels and doors above him.

Other than that, the room was really rather bland; there was no furniture to speak of or any type of decoration; the walls and floor were either painted a tannish brown or a strange metallic-steel type color. Since patience was not one of David's best virtues, he rocked back and forth on his heels and adjusted the five-point cap that rested on his head. A few more moments passed like this before a door on David's left opened, attracting his attention; 'Isca emerged from it there, escorted by two Heretic Elites and a strange floating sphere with a blue center, which immediately began rattling off.

"Ah, a Reclaimer! Splendid!" the little thing piped happily as it floated toward David and appeared to look him over. "I am three-four-three Guilty Spark, monitor of Installation Zero-Four!"

'This thing sure likes to talkâ€|' David mused with a smirk. "David Carson."

'Isca seemed to find this amusing, but commented on nothing while the monitor conversed with David, talking about his eons of service to the Forerunners and the Flood and otherwise completely random things that he could think of. Once David managed to get the thing to shut up, he turned his attention to 'Isca and pointed to the hologram of the station.

"Having a little trouble, 'Isca?"

The Elite nodded. "Yesâ€|the Flood have proven to be more than we and the Sentinels can handle."

"What the Hell were they doing here anyway?"

David didn't like where this conversation was headed at all. If the Flood were here on the facility, even in small numbers, they would quickly infest the whole thing in a few hours and overrun and infest everyone and everything inside. That meant that David and his crew would have to get out of here as quickly as possible or risk their ship being attacked and overtaken. Besides, being trapped on a Flood infested facility was _not_ David's idea of a fun day.

"We were researching them to try and find a way to combat the Flood—but our efforts have failed, obviously. Fear not, sergeant, for your ship has not been compromised; I've got my best security teams defending it. However, before you go, I must ask your assistance in one last matter."

"What's that?"

There was another pause as Isca glanced around the facility, as if he were trying to take one last look at a best friend on his deathbed, which had to be another not-so-good sign of what was to come. Finally, the Elite began to explain what had been happening among the Covenant over the last few months, going into detail about the grumblings the Sangheili were having about the Jiralhanae, and vice versa. The Prophets seemed to favor the Jiralhanae much higher than the Sangheili because the damn things could get away with just about anything; one even killed a Sangheili within spitting distance of a Holy Temple, an offense that even a Lekgolo (or a Hunter in human terms) would have been ripped apart for.

On top of it all, a new Arbiter had been forced into service. Apparently, the Arbiter was a former Fleet Commander and in charge of the attack on Reach and Halo's defense. When Halo was blown to bits, though, the Elite had been held responsible and ordered executed by the Covenant High Council on the charge of Heresy. Before that task could be carried out, however, the Prophet of Truth assigned this Elite as the Covenant's Arbiter. Apparently, his first assignment was to come here and silence 'Isca permanently. Worst of all, the Heretics' long range sensors had picked up a trio of Phantoms en route to the station as they spoke. That wasn't even the worst of the news; the Covenant had found Earth and were attacking it, but with a smaller force than intended; apparently, the Prophet of Regret had jumped the gun a bit.

"You must make this Arbiter see the truth, sergeant. That is my sole request of you, for I have failed in this venture; if the Elites will not see, then I fear we will be enslaved to the Prophets forever—if they do not cast us aside first."

David was in shock; 'Isca was asking him to do something that should have been entrusted to 'Takamee or another of the Sangheili, but a mere Human had been charged with the emancipation of an entire race—a race, mind you, that had been helping in the utter destruction of David's own. Despite that fact, the marine could not refuse the Heretic leader; the Elites had been lied to about everything and brainwashed much like the Nazis of the twentieth century during World War Two. So, David simply nodded and said

"I'll do what I can, 'Isca, though I can't make you any promises. However, let me give you this much; the Prophets will be brought to justice for their atrocities."

That seemed to please 'Isca greatly and the Elite stopped his pacing. For a moment, the two just watched each other; even though they'd been in each other's company for a few days now, neither exactly trusted the other, though they had developed a mutual respect for one another. Most of the Sangheili were actually pretty likeable things if one could get past the fact that they'd helped in the Prophets' genocidal campaign against humanity for three decades and a couple

years now, which surprised David a great deal; he never really figured Elites for the social kind of creatures and always thought they'd be kind of like the old Spartans on earth (the Greek onesâ€|not super soldiers) and do nothing but train for battle.

"_David? David come in. This is Cassandra._"

"Cassandra? Is everything okay?" David asked, worried.

"_For now, yes. The crew and the ship are all ready to go, David, but we need to get moving; that strike team should be here soon._"

"Okay. I'm on my way." David replied before he focused his attention back on 'Isca. "Wellâ€|it looks like I'm leaving. Good luck to you, 'Isca 'Fusamee."

He nodded. "And good luck to you, David Carson."

No more words were spoken and each soldier turned to head their separate ways. Guilty Spark, who had apparently been chattering on and on about nonsense pretty much, seemed not to notice for a minute, then hovered out after 'Isca. David managed to find his way back to the hangar without any incident, but he could hear what all was going on at the other side of the facility; plasma grenade detonations were unmistakable. A Phantom drop ship, Cassandra and a trio of Elites were waiting for David below it. He leapt down over to them off of a catwalk and landed quite silently; a feat he didn't think was possible in combat boots, but managed to pull off.

Was it the fact that he had nearly been infested by the Flood that had given him this ability? And how could he heal himself so terribly quickly after being injured, even to extremes? As soon as David and the others got back to Earth, he was going to see Doctor Halsey and get this checked outâ€|unless the Covenant had found Earth like 'Isca had said. 'That can't be the case,' David said to himself quietly as the Phantom drew the five beings inside with its gravity lift, 'we took every precaution, unlessâ€|' The odds of the next option that screamed through David's head was not only insane, but very very possible.

"They already knew where it wasâ€|"

18. Plans

****A/N:** Well, I'm back again with another chapter of Marines of Charlie Company. Before I get down to business, I've been thinking; would anyone be interested in making this in to a Web comic or Flash video? Unfortunately, I can't pay anyone or anything; I just want to see what it'd look like. If you're interested, send me an E-mail and some concept art from chapter one, which is being updated so watch for it.**

****Lecter 42** â€" Ah ha, my friend, and it all gets better. Just keep readin' and revewin!**

****WilltheWatcher** â€" I've really been experimenting with this stuff over the last few chapters and let you guys really see what he's

thinking. **

TheMadHatter77 â€" Well, I'm really glad you're enjoying it, honestly.

**WarriorofVirtue â€" Will do. **

Linkmaster2832 â€" I've pondered about this for a while now, and really kinda just threw it in there. I mean, why else would Regret have gone straight to Earth like he did?

Koolgamer â€" Welcome aboard the bandwagon of death and destruction. I hope you enjoy the ride.

The Marines of Charlie Company

Book II

Aftermath

Chapter Three:

Plans

**Song Recommendation: **

David couldn't believe itâ€|no, he _wouldn't_ believe it. There was no way the Prophets could have possibly known where Earth was this whole timeâ€|was there? A million different thoughts collided in his mind, mulling over a million other possibilities, but they all came to the same conclusion; the Prophet of Regret had jumped directly to Earth after a reported attack managed to destroy one of their fleets. Worst of all, according to some reports the Heretics had intercepted on the Covenant BattleNet, they didn't expect Humanity to be on Earth at all. Why?

Nothing was making any sense anymore; the Brutes and Elites were on the verge of massacring each other, the Prophets nearly executed a Fleet Commander for something he couldn't stop, there was a Heretic base in the middle of nowhere and worst of all, David had now been charged with the emancipation of the Elites as a whole. His head spun with information and David could already feel the stress boiling within him and didn't even notice as the Phantom left the hangar bay and rocketed out toward the _Ancient Fury_. He backed away from the gravity lift beneath his feet unconsciously and sank down against the wall, his hands clutched on his head due to the rather rough migraine that had developed rather quickly.

His ears rang loudly, intensifying with each and every sound the Phantom made, probably due to his enhanced hearing the Flood gave him. Then again, it could have been due to the migraine he'd suddenly developed, but David didn't know or care; that same grisly voice he'd heard on Halo had come back and was quietly whispering deadly threats in his mind. Each word only caused the ringing in his ears to grow even louder and more aggravating with each passing second. Just as David felt his head was about to burst, everything went black; he was floating in a sea of nothingness. David could not see, nor could he hear; there was nothing.

Slowly, however, a white light managed to penetrate the inky darkness

surrounding the marine sergeant in the form of a small hole, about the size of a pinhead. It began to grow and grow and grow until everything around him was illuminated and bathed in a blinding white light. David instinctively closed his eyes and tried to shield his face with his hands until the white slowly faded to a luminescent glow. The marine opened his eyes and was greeted once again by the Forerunner, all clad in their ornamented, flowing robes. His muscles ached (as did every bone he had), but David still managed to push himself to a sitting position and stare up at them. Despite their constant conversing, David never really had a chance to get a look at them; their faces were always shrouded by the hoods of their cloaks.

"_You have survived, Young One. Well done. However, this is just the beginning of your Great Journey, the one the Prophets' speak so highly of, yet know nothing about._" Said Nak'Niral.

"Great Journey? No, no way am I activating the Halos."

"_That is now what Nak'Niral speaks of, young David Carson. You are a hero of legend among the Sangheili species; they have awaited your arrival much like the Christians of Earth await the savior of their souls to return. The salvation of their people is in your hands and we will guide you as best we can._"

David cast glances between Nak'Niral and Manaan before sighing to himself softly. After that, he started thinking; what did the salvation of the Elites have to do with Halo? He was sure that the Forerunner wouldn't tell him because the only information they ever gave him pertained directly to his mission and anything else was told in ridiculous riddles that David really didn't feel like having to solve right now, so he just let that question go to the back of his mind; he'd ask them about it later. Another few minutes passed in silence before either party began to speak again; it was David's turn to break the silence.

"So, what do we do now? There's a Covenant fleet in orbit and they're sure to detect us as soon as we start moving."

"_Consult the Sangheili in steel armor. He will guide you through this perilous time. Trust his judgment and you shall survive. For now, that is all, David Carson; good luck to you, as Humans would say, until we meet again._"

Then, as if nothing ever happened, the light and dark faded, leaving a muddled blur of purple, grey and black before his eyes. He blinked and shook his head quickly to try and clear his vision as his hearing and senses slowly returned to him. Surprisingly enough, his migraine was gone, but not the aches and pains of constant sprinting, combat and not enough sleep. As David tried to move, he realized that there was a weight upon his shoulder; when he turned his head to the side, David found that Cassandra was asleep on his shoulder, her arms wrapped around one of his tightly. A small smile crept across his lips as he gently brushed a lock of fiery red hair out of her face before unlocking his arm from hers and gently slipping away.

None of the Elites or Grunts were present near David, so he decided to have a look around. The interior of a Phantom was much, much more spacious than that of a Pelican and the armor looked to be a whole lot thicker. For some reason, the Covenant seemed to be obsessed with

the color purple; everything, and he meant everything, was purple or pink-ish color, from Ghosts to Wraiths to Covenant Cruisers. As he mused quietly to himself, the Elites returned and definitely did not look happy. 'Takamee, being the leader of the group, began to explain the situation to David. Just as he thought, a Covenant fleet, including the Holy City of High Charity, had just come out of Slipspace near Threshold. He had a vague idea on how to slip past them (or among them), but it was a risky one and might not work.

"'Takamee, I'm leaving this one to you; space combat is not my specialty, nor do I have any knowledge of it. Do what you think's the best thing to do."

As he spoke, David made his way back to Cassandra, who was still sleeping peacefully, and sat down next to her. David rested her head on his shoulder again and watched the Elite.

"Just get us through this, 'Takamee."

'Takamee turned and headed back toward the Phantom's cockpit as David settled in for a long flight; the Ancient Fury had already entered orbit on the other side of Threshold from the Covenant fleet around High Charity and it would take them a while to get to the ship, so he'd just enjoy what time he had alone with Cassandra—whether she was awake or not. She looked peaceful, David observed, almost serene in her sleeping state on his shoulder. For the first time in a very very long time, David was happy despite their desperate situation; happy because he not only knew that there was someone out there for him, but knew she was sleeping right beside him and on his shoulder, as a matter of fact.

Nothing was easy—nothing ever would be easy, but David would get everyone out of this mess; it was his duty both as their leader and a soldier—even if it cost his life.

19. Deception

****Warrior of Virtue: You're right on both accounts. I'll check that out ASAP.****

****TheMadHatter577: I'm trying not to make this action-centered; I want to capture the human and emotional sides of this story as well.****

****Skullcap: Welcome back to the land of the lifeless.

****Firebendingguy: It's on the way.****

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****Chapter Three****

****Deception****

Not long afterward, David was standing in the Ancient Fury's bridge, observing the crew and all there. Great expense must have gone in to acquiring and maintaining this ship; not only were all the crew dressed in typical Covenant gear (as opposed to the rather shitty looking Heretic gear), but the interior of the ship and control room looked absolutely brand new. When David asked one of the crew about the ship, he learned that this ship was new. Stolen, in fact. However, this cruiser's presence or existence was virtually unknown because the entire crew that had been assigned was placed in their positions by the Heretics.

Hundreds, no thousands, of ships were visible on the Fury's view screen including one ship that looked like it could have been a chunk of a small moon, but distinctly Covenant in color. The top half was a large dome-like structure that encompassed a majority of the ship's mass, while the lower section looked like a large spike—a docking mechanism, perhaps? David groaned under his breath and tapped his foot against the deck beneath him as he watched 'Takamee and the Ship Master converse about their plans for blending in with the fleet.

If the Covenant had received reports that the Ancient Fury was stolen, then their disguise was no good. Another thing David had just realized was that they had no explanation for what a brand new ship was doing out in the middle of deep space, and 'Takamee must've realized the same thing because it was voiced rather boisterously from where he was standing. The Ship Master reassured 'Takamee that all had been taken care of; before the new fleet arrived, another of their agents had modified the records along the entire BattleNet (which must've been a pain in the ass to do), showing that the Ancient Fury had been assigned to the now Arbiter's fleet. The slip space drive had been intentionally damaged and was now undergoing repairs to explain why they'd been down planet side.

Now, there was really nothing for David to do except return to his 'cell'. Surely, the Covenant would be intelligent enough to run a bioscan on the life forms aboard the Ancient Fury for any kind of deception and the risk wasn't worth it. So, David announced that everything would be left to 'Takamee and the Ship Master, then departed for his cell. For one reason or another, David got the very distinct feeling that this was going to be a long haul.

'Takamee breathed a sigh of relief; rejoining the fleet was easier than he thought it was going to be. The Anceint Fury fell in among the rest of the fleet surrounding the High Charity and disappeared amongst the giant mess. Now all that was left to be done was figure out where to go next. The Elite paced, wondered, pondered, tapped his chin and all-out deliberated the options. Surely if they approached the human homeworld alone, the Fury would be blown apart before any words could be spoken. Then again, if they stayed among the fleet, there was another danger that the Hierarchs would want to interrogate David and his fellow marines, which was one thing 'Takamee would not allow.

A sharp crackle broke 'Takamee's conversation and he whirled about, only to be relieved quickly. Another Ship Master questioned if their slip space drive was fully operational, to which the Fury's Ship Master replied an affirmative.

"Good," came the other's voice, "another Holy Ring has been

discovered. The Holy Prophet of Regret is already there, and we shall join him. The fleet will be departing now that you are ready._"

Sure enough, a slip space rupture opened off the High Charity's bow and the entire fleet was sucked in not two minutes after that communication ended. They would be arriving at this newly discovered Halo in a matter of hours, which didn't allow 'Takamee much time to think at all. He immediately began making his way down toward the brig where he found David asleep with his female companion. They looked rather uncomfortable leaning against the cold hard bulkhead like that, but 'Takamee said nothing and instead lightly shook David's shoulder and woke the man from his semi-peaceful slumber. 'Takamee watched as the human slowly untangled himself from the female and stood as they exited the cell.

"There is a problem," 'Takamee began as quietly as his voice would allow, "the fleet is heading to another Halo, not to Earth as we had hoped. The Hierarchs are planning to activate the Halo now that the Prophet of Regret is present."

The human's reaction was odd; he smiled.

"Well then let's not keep the good Prophet waiting, shall we? I want you to assemble a strike team; we're hitting that Halo ASAP. I owe those Prophets big time."

The Elite nodded and left his companion to whatever business he deemed and set off for the barracks to round up a squad. He met with several others in the corridors and they followed him down to the barracks. When he arrived, there were dozens of Elites milling about or sparring as was usual for them to do. 'Takamee cleared his throat with a gruff 'ahem' and stepped inward toward the crowd as they respectfully stepped aside, dropped what they were doing and turned to face him.

"My brothers the time has come for you to unleash your rage against those who would use you for their own gains! I have found one to lead you a human of unimaginable strength, skill and courage. He will lead you against the Prophets if you will follow."

All was quiet for a moment as the Elites pondered and shifted, looking from one to the other waiting for the first voice to speak out either in favor or in disbelief of what the Ranger had said. That voice came in the form of young 'Zalamee, who had been sparring with what appeared to be a Veteran.

"My brothers I have seen the human that our leader speaks of. He is strong and will strike against those who believe the Prophets and their lies with an untold fury! We must follow him wherever he leads. Only then will we be free of the Prophets' servitude!"

This was followed by a chorus of battle cries and roars as every Elite in the room mobilized and began preparing their equipment for the battle to come. They chattered and talked, wondering what this human must be like if these two Elites put so much faith in them. Then, all the noise ceased as the doors to the barracks opened and all eyes turned toward it; there stood a grim looking human with piercing eyes and a female behind him.

"Get ready. The fleet's about to arrive."

20. Prophet Hunting

****A/N:** Guys, I'm REALLY sorry about the massive delay. My home PC exploded on me at the beginning of the summerâ€¦so, yeah. For the time being, I'm using a laptop that I have access to maybe twice a week. At any rate, I'll try and update Charlie Company as often as humanly possible. All of you have my sincerest apologies for thisâ€¦but I do have good news!**

****I** am proud to say that the Marines of Charlie Company is currently in the process of being drawn into a Web comic! Teh sweetness!**

****Meeph:** Hurrah! **

****Sam Church:** I knowâ€¦I'm good like that.**

****Firebendingguy:** I'll work on both things.**

****Lecter42:** Well, you have my explanation. I knew people would be looking for things that I overlooked, so I read this chapter a lot of times.**

****Warrior of Virtue:** Damn skippy.**

****Featured song:** My December â€" Linkin Park**

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****Chapter Five****

****Prophet Hunting****

David rolled to the side, barely avoiding the brute's fist that was bound for his head and lunged forward, plunging his plasma blade deeply into the beast's chest with a sickening sizzle, followed by the smell of burnt meat. He yanked the blade up and to the left, diagonally cleaving the Brute in two. Since their landing on Halo, a lot had happened, most notable being the fact that more Marines other than himself, Lt Jackson, Cassandra and the other few men and women were on Halo. More surprising, though, was the fact that the Prophet of Regret chose to ignore both the Marines and Heretics on Delta Halo as it was being called. If ignorance was going to be Regret's path, then David was going to make damn sure that the Prophet lived up to his name. A smile slowly formed across David's lips as he charged forward into a swatch of charging brutes as the thought ran through his head and as though he were completely oblivious to the plasma arcing past his head.

Again and again, David's blade found it's mark and easily cut down any Brute that dared step in his path. It was only a small camp of them, but David was starting to get rusty and wanted to warm up before the big fish reared its ugly head. He ducked and weaved and

bobbed and slashed and killed and maimed his way forward. Brute Shots exploded all around him, kicking up dust and rocks from the canyon floor. David had noticed changed in himself since that Flood attacked him on Halo; combat was now a thrill, a rush that he needed more and more of now. Cutting down his enemies had been pleasing before, but that feral desire deep in his soul seemed to roar to life after his near-infection. That coupled with his enhanced speed, strength and reaction speeds made him oh so much more deadly on the field of battle. He felt invincible. Of course, David knew he was far from being so and that alone kept him from making stupid mistakes.

All too soon, his faithful blades ran out of charge and fizzled out as another Brute rampaged toward the Marine, who smirked as he brought the M90 shotgun that had been strapped across his back to bear. One, two, three earth shattering booms echoed above the rest of the pitched combat as the bullet-riddled corpse of what used to be a Brute fell to the ground and tumbled head over heels until it came to a stop at David's feet. Another Brute came at him from the right, but was quickly eliminated by an Elite's particle beam rifle. David nodded to his ally and pressed onward again. Soon enough, the few remaining Brutes were cut down with David's losses at a bare minimum and now he had time to recollect how they'd gotten where they were.

It hadn't been long since the landing force hit the hard top and began to establish a head so that an ops center could be set up. They chose a clearing set right in the middle of a rather dense looking forest and had to evacuate a few of the more hostile residents. The Covenant knew the crew members of the Ancient Fury were Heretics, but it was far too late now; they had already landed and the Fury was all but invisible thanks to the Engineers onboard. After the outpost was destroyed and a new ops center was set up, the Covenant counter-attacked with a battalion or two of Brutes and Jackals, who David and the others had just dispatched. The war-hardened Marine rolled a Brute over with a rather sharp nudge with the tip of his boot and examined the blank stare on the monster's face with a bit of an odd grin.

David turned away from the still-bleeding corpse and set off to rejoin the Elites that had been poring over their deceased enemies looking for weapons, ammo and any intel they might be able to use. So far, there was nothing. He noticed a few heads turn his directions upon his approached, so he smiled and gave a short wave that was received by several nods. 'Takamee stood at the center of the semi-circle and was talking back and forth with the Ship Commander, 'Eksa, who was more than eager to cut down his enemies at every possible engagement.

"What's our status, 'Takamee?"

"A half-dozen dead, maybe forty wounded. Sufficient enough to slow our forces down a bit, but not crippling."

He nodded and looked to Eksa. "Any news on the BattleNet?"

Eksa shook his head and David sighed; the Covenant weren't planning anything yet and that was a good thing. It also meant that they had no idea where the Prophet of Regret was hiding. Once David found that sunuvabitch, he was going to rip Regret's throat out and strangle him with it. "The Engineers do have a gift for you, though. Head on back

to the Fury; they're waiting for you in the Hangar."

The Marine quirked an eyebrow and left 'Takamee in charge of the cleanup, then turned toward the ship while scratching his head. He passed by a few odd-looking buildings that were meant to house the Grunts and then by a few of the tiny, rather adorable creatures. Some slept, others walked about in a gorilla-like fashion, and the rest either chattered back and forth or played with one another (David even recalled seeing a Grunt in red armor fooling around with a sleeping Grunt's methane intake valve). Finally, the Marine arrived at the Gravity Lift and was pulled into the belly of the ship and then proceeded to make his way down to the hangar. It was an odd feeling strolling around in a Covenant battle cruiser like he owned the damn thing, and even more odd to be greeted by Hunters, Elites and Grunts than to have the piss shot out of him. David continued to think to himself until he arrived at the bottom level of the hangar and found the rest of his surviving marines donned in ODST armor, oddly enough.

Several Engineers quickly approached the Marine and presented him with his own suit of body armor, this one painted gold and royal blue, unlike the others standard black. It was pieced together on his person up to the helmet, which he was allowed to put on himself. Then he knew why this was a surprise; they had integrated a HUD, shield system and ammo counter into the ODST armor somehow. He heard the others 'oooh' and 'aaah' quietly as they watched him move about in the armor, trying to get a feel for it. Another Engineer approached him and began tweaking the system slightly, which allowed him to not only see tell friend from foe, but also gave him names, ranks and ID numbers. A text message scrolled across the top of his visor explaining how to turn this feature on and off.

Eager to play with his new toy, David began flexing his fingers as though he were typing on a keyboard and grinned from ear-to-ear as he accessed dozens of the suit's functions, from placement of the shield array to a map of the surrounding area to the communication system. He found that he could send messages and even communicate directly with the leaders, individual soldiers and even entire battalions at a time with just a quick flex of his finger. David whistled appreciatively and waved to the Engineers in a thankful manner. They all chirped happily, and all of them left but one, who approached David with what appeared to be the hilt of an energy sword custom fit for a human's hand, almost like the hilt of an old Samurai sword. It activated the same way a normal sword did, but this blade was different; it wasn't two pronged and jagged. This one was one blade, long, and gracefully curved. Characters were 'etched' into the 'blade' of the weapon, creating a rather neat effect. David rotated his wrist left and right, then moved his hand up and down, nodding the whole time. This was a truly awesome weapon.

Better yet, though, was the fact that this one had no 'ammo' counter displayed on his HUD, which either meant that this one would never run out of charge or that it was incompatible with his new ODST armor. Either way, he couldn't wait to test this thing in the field of battle. With another flex of his right index finger, David deactivated the blade and clipped it to his belt. As the final Engineer left, David couldn't help but turn to the other Marines and say

"Neat shit, huh guys?"

They nodded and stepped aside, revealing another 'ODST' behind them, this time in a deep maroon and purple set of armor. Her helmet was off and Cassandra was smiling at David.

"You're damn right it is, hon."

Hoots and hollers echoed in the Hangar as the other Marines cheered at her comment and commenced conversation immediately, mostly questions of 'What's next, Sarge?' and 'When are we gonna get back to Earth?'. Chaos ensued for the next several minutes before David managed to get his fellow Earthings calmed down and ready to listen. Now that they were all focused, David could communicate his plan and communicate it he would.

"The way I see it, ladies and gents, the best shot we have at aiding Earth is to take out the Prophet of Regret here on Delta Halo. If we do that, it should throw the Covenant into disarray since the fleet already at Earth is Regret's personal fleet. After that, we need to focus on finding the Prophets of Truth and Mercy; with them out of the picture, most of the Covenant should be a piece of cake to persuade into fighting for us. Then we can figure out where exactly their homeworld is, if they have one, and destroy it."

It was a good plan in theory, but the possibility of success was slim to very little, but better than anything else he could think of at the time. Now that this particular issue was settled, David scrolled through the Comm. list until he found 'Takamee's name and proceeded to open up a private link with the Elite.

"Takamee, you receiving me?"

"_Quite well, actually. I take it you received the gifts?"_

"Yeah. Those Engineers kick some serious ass. We have any leads on Regret's location yet?" There was a slight pause.

"_Well yes and no."_

"'Yes and no'? What the hell does 'yes and no' mean? Do we or don't we?"

"_We knew where he was, but are receiving mixed reports that he's dead. Killed by 'The Demon', apparently. Looks like your Master Chief beat us to the punch, eh?"_

David nearly laughed; somehow, the Chief always managed to beat just about everybody to the punch perhaps because of his superhuman reflexes. Well, that was just one less target for them to worry about.

"Any news on the Chief?"

"_Just as mixed as the reports on Regret, but most of what we can gather points toward his destruction."_

"No."

**A/N: I know, I know lotsa dialogue at the end of that one. Sue me. At any rate, I hope to begin updating again here soon because

school's starting back! Man, I never thought I'd be excited about thatâ€|**

21. The Helljumpers

A/N: Here we go for round twenty one! I really hope you guys are enjoying this and not just humoring me.

WillTheWatcher: Yeahâ€|again, I'm really sorry about the lack of updates. Hopefully, I can do so more often.

WarriorofVirtue: Eeyahâ€|it literally exploded.

Lecter42: Really? Hummâ€|I'll have to read their works some time. You'll see where I'm going with this. Remember; his abilities are further enhanced thanks to the Flood.

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Chapter Six

The Helljumpers

Recommended Song: Uh...whatever you're listening to.

According to the holographic map he was seeing, David could pick out four or five Covenant encampments near them, each varying in size. The largest seemed to be more toward the rear with the smaller ones peppered about in some sort of defensive array. They hadn't attacked yet, or even at all since the last wave had been destroyed and David could only guess that the Covenant were building up there forces to attempt a Stalin-esque charge on the Fury. He and his troops would need to attack well before the enemy could build such a force to throw them off balance and follow up with a swift attack on the larger camp. The Marine drummed his fingers on the thigh plate of his new armor and rubbed his chin thoughtfully trying to come up with a solution to everything. He'd never commanded such a large force before, but was positive he could come up with something.

Then it hit him like a brick launched out of a MAC gun. The obvious solution to his problem would be to send out small raiding parties against the smallest of the camps and throw the Covenant into disarray for a short period. Then, a mock-attack would be launched on the Covenant's large camp while the main force hit them from the rear and the raiding parties attacked from the left and right flanks once the largest camp's garrison was drawn out in the open. David also planned to have Wraith tanks standing by in case the enemy had any heavy artillery of their own and Banshees ready to take off at a moment's notice. A plan such as this probably wouldn't work against most of David's human counterparts, but the Covenant, especially Brutes, relied solely upon brute force.

With his plan in mind, David called 'Eksa and 'Takamee into the planning room to go over his strategy with them. All in all, things seemed to go over well with his two Covenant commanders, who then set

about to contacting their subordinates as David left to find his Marines, who were found sitting around inside their Pelican talking up a storm. He stepped inside and took a seat and just listened as the two women and four men conversed, then moved to the cockpit and began scrolling through the frequencies in a rather half-hearted attempt to pick up any human signals. While his hopes for another human being out there, it did give David something to do while the strike teams were being assembled. Amazingly enough, though, after about ten minutes of mindless knob turning, he did manage to pick up a transmission on an ODST bandwidth.

"â€|_Frost commanding first squad. Does anybody out there read me, over?"_

David nearly dove for the transmitter and quickly clicked it on. "This is Marine Sergeant David A. Carson to whoever's transmitting. You reading me?"

There was a short pause.

"_Loud and clear, Sergeant! I thought we were the only ones left. What's your location?"_

David quickly called Cassandra into the cockpit and had her take a quick run over the navigation system. She discerned the other Pelican's location with a few simple button presses and a couple flipped switches. Frost's transport was a long, long way away, but Cassandra figured that they might have enough fuel to make it to the Fury. First, though, David needed to learn a few things about this Halo and Earth's status, not to mention about the Chief, the Covenant and if the Flood had been released or not here. Another few minutes of communication not only revealed that the Flood had been released, but that Commander Keyes had personally made her way to the library to retrieve the index before the Covenant could. No one had heard back from her in some time, so the crew was naturally getting a tad bit worried. Apparently, the good ODST and his buddies left with two other Pelicans that were shot down by some strange green creatures wielding SPNKR "Jackhammer" rocket launchers.

David clenched his fist without thinking about it as Frost explained the current situation and he gritted his teeth; of all the times for the Flood to be released, this had to be the worst. Especially with Commander Keyes out in the field like she wasâ€|he felt partially responsible for her father's death and silently swore to keep Miranda alive no matter what happened. The Pelican's sensors could now pick up the Lieutenant's own drop ship as it approached and David ducked back through the door and made his way down the back ramp into the hangar. The shield was lowered after some communication with the upper decks and Charlie-229 touched down inside, the ramp lowering to the deck with a resounding 'clang'. Many of the crew, including David's Marines, lined up outside the ship and awaited the exiting personnel, Lieutenant Jackson at the front and David right behind him. David peered around the slightly taller man and caught an initial glimpse of who he assumed was the ODST leader, Lieutenant Owen Frost. He looked not to be a very tall man, but had a commanding aura about him like few officers David had served under or with before, nor was he very muscularâ€|just toned and lithely athletic, like a cheetah. Everything about the man seemed to scream authority and confidence, from the way he carried himself to the way he walkedâ€|and David liked to see such rarities in an officer.

Jackson stepped forward. "Second Lieutenant Peter Jackson, leader of second squad. This man is Sergeant David Carson, third squad, Charlie Company."

David saluted, and Owen returned the gesture with an added nod and shook the first man's hand. "Owen Frost, ODST Squad 661. It's good to see some human faces around here."

As the two officers conversed, David made his way to the rest of the Helljumpers and introduced himself, learning their names in the process; the medic's name was Riley, to his left were a trio of riflemen named Black, Carpenter and Groome and they stood in front of the squad's heavy weapons man was called Hendrix. For the next little while, the men sat around exchanging war stories, women stories and anything else they could think of while Owen and Jackson conversed quietly. Despite the fact that he was enthralled in talking to the new guys, David couldn't help taking a glance every now and then at Cassandra, who was chatting away contently with another of the female Marines, whose first name was Ranae—and that was all David knew about her. After a moment or two, Cassandra seemed to notice David staring and smiled at him, excusing herself from the current conversation. She made her way over to the Pelican, grabbed David by the forearm and unceremoniously pulled him out of the hangar protesting the whole way. He could hear the other Marines laugh faintly in the hangar as the door shut behind he and Cassandra, who turned about to face him.

"We haven't had a lot of time together—and I want to get to know you. The real you." She stated bluntly.

David quirked a brow as he tried to comprehend what she had just said. The real him? That was a good point—even David had lost track of who he was over the years of constant fighting, killing, shooting and being shot at. Did he even have a personality, a soul anymore or was he just a machine, a creation meant for nothing more than walking, ordering, carrying a weapon, killing and being killed? The more he thought about it, the more David realized that he hadn't really taken the time to think or feel in a very long time—longer than he was comfortable than he was willing to admit.

"Well, Cassandra—to tell you the truth, I don't even know the real me anymore. For the last few years, all I've focused on was killing them and keeping me and my alive—never really thinking about what I wanted." Not much of an answer, but it was the only thing he had.

Cassandra nodded understandably and then did something that caught David so off guard, he nearly fell; she hugged him.

"I feel so sorry for you, David—" she murmured into his chest quietly as they stood in the corridor, he unsure of what to do next. "You've lost everything—I still have my family on Earth."

Cassandra looked up from his chest and David couldn't restrain himself. He kissed her right then and there, a woman he'd only known for just over two weeks, barely knew anything about and barely spent any time with. She didn't pull back like he expected, however, and pushed forward into him, standing on her tiptoes. For some reason,

despite all his doubts and conscious, it felt rightâ€|nearly perfectly blissful in all its forms. They stood there for what seemed like forever, each perfectly content in the other's embrace, until they managed to pry their lips apart with a pair of sheepish grins. Then, the doors behind them opened and were immediately followed by a chorus of cheers and shouts from the jackasses that had been standing there for who knew how long. David blew out a sigh and turned around with an expression on his face that could have killed a SPARTAN if looks could do such a thing.

The others laughed uproariously and clapped David on the back and cheered at Cassandra as they passed, earning a scoff from him and a blush from her. The last one in was Owen, who smiled at David. Now that he saw the other man's face, David had to say, he was quite impressed. Owen had steely blue eyes that held an intelligent quantity, a gaunt, pale face with sharp features, giving him a nearly hawk-like look. David caught Cassandra's meager smile out of the corner of his eye and snickered quietly to himself, earning him a punch in the arm from the smaller woman. She pulled herself away and began to walk toward her quarters and called back "By the way, you need to shave, Sergeant."

****A/N:** Yeah...and that's the end of 21! I felt that the David/Cassandra thing needed to be explored more, so I went with that for this one. Also, I'd like to thank my special guest star, Owen Frost! Obsidian Thirteen and I have been planning this for a while, so...yeah. Expect to see more of his characters as Charlie Company advances along! Wahoo!**

****As always, read and review!****

22. First Battle

****A/N:** I don't have much to say now, so I'll just get down to business here.**

****TheMadHatter577:** Thankya very much. Hope you're enjoying this.**

****Warrior of Virtue:**** ****Yes, yes I do. xD Thankfully, no. No one was hurt.****

****NoneAvailible:** The action will pick up soon. Go back and read; he was near Captain Keyes when the Flood took him, so he feels responsible.**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Book II****

****Aftermath****

****Chapter Seven****

****First Battle****

****Recommended Song:****

'So, we were too late.' David thought bitterly as he observed the

enemy formations before him. There had to be at least two or three hundred Brutes out there in front of them, their leader standing at the head just like David was with his Elites and Grunts. He knew that there were bound to be Jackals out there somewhere armed with Particle Beams, so he'd set up Owen and the ODST with snipers of their own in the trees surrounding their clearing with orders not to fire until David gave the signal.. The Brutes were barking and growling loudly, their formation looking like a giant, writhing mass of white and purple, their leader egging it on. His Elites, on the other hand, were calm and collected like Spartans of Ancient Greece awaiting the Persians at Thermopylae.

David grinned and motioned 'Takamee to his side. "I'm leaving you in charge here."

"Where are you going?" the Elite asked.

"To test out their leader. This is gonna be real fun."

As the Marine strode away from his own side, he could have sworn he heard 'Takamee mumble 'crazy fool'. Of course, David had to agree with his comrade; marching toward the enemy formation by one's self was not something that would be considered intelligent among most of his peers, but he had a feeling about this Brute. As he approached, several of the enemy must have barked some kind of warning to their commander, who turned and matched David's stride step for step to the center of the clearing. Each being stopped about six paces away from one another and stood silently for several minutes. David was sizing up this brute, who he was sure was doing the same thing. Oddly enough, this one was not normal sized; he was actually a good two or three inches shorter than most others of his kind that David had seen. However, what this Brute lacked in height, he certainly made up for in girth and probably outweighed his comrades by a good fifty pounds or so.

The staredown continued for several more minutes before the brute scoffed before spinning his staff about his head and around his body like a pair of nun chucks before stopping with the pointed end of the staff mere millimeters away from David's head, who had not flinched an inch. David calmly removed his specially designed energy blade from its resting place at his belt and activated it, earning a lunge from the brute that David dodged easily. He parried a blow that was meant for his torso and barely ducked under another that was meant to crush his skull. David kicked off to the right in a tight roll and lunged forward toward the brute with a diagonal slash that was easily blocked. For a moment, each opponent tested the other's strength before they separated and went at it again. David leapt backward, then charged forward again and slid at the last minute between the brute's legs.

Though caught slightly off guard, the Brute dove away, leaving David on his back like a turtle. It bellowed a roar and held its staff high above its head and brought it down repeatedly, David managing to roll out of the way just barely each time. The Marine leapt to his feet and was greeted by a furry fist to his face that sent him tumbling across the ground even after his shields took most of the blow. He glanced up and leapt high over another sideswipe and kicked the brute in the face when he came down, back flipping away from the angry creature. He hit the ground a little harder than he intended and grunted rather loudly and it was then that he realized he had a

concussion; his eyes wouldn't focus well and the opponent he faced was a blur.

The tired marine pushed himself to his feet and kept his eyes on the Brute as best he could, who staggered a bit as it stood. David gripped the hilt of his blade tightly and clicked on the radio to every soldier under his command.

"Get ready to attack; this fight is over one way or another."

David then cut the link before anyone could argue or reply and sprinted forward on the balls of his feet, just running as quickly as he could toward the Brute, who lunged forward with its pike extended parallel to the ground. David parried it out of the way, spun around the edge of the pike and brought his sword down just as hard as he could and felt it hit something thick, then free itself. The next thing he heard over his panting was a thick, wet 'thud' and looked down into the eyes of his opponent, who was staring lifelessly at the clouds and landscape above them. Before he had time to observe his handiwork, David heard the collective thunder of two armies charging and readied himself for the swath of Brutes he knew had to be headed his way. David's vision cleared suddenly and he nearly yelped in surprise; a Brute was standing right in front of him. He cleaved it in half and ducked under another blow that was, again, meant to crush his skull. David brought the blade upward vertically and severed the arm, then spun with the blade at his hip and slashed diagonally up and to the left finishing his opponent.

He looked over his shoulder when someone cried his name and snatched the shotgun that had been hurled by said someone out of the air, chambered a round and went to work. David rolled away from a strike aimed at his side, brought the shotgun to bear and fired point blank into a Brute's thick, muscular hide that gutted the creature. He removed a grenade from his bandolier and hurled it with all his might into a formation of Covenant troops that were pounding his own with Brute Shots. One Brute shouted loudly and dove aside, but the others were too slow. The grenade detonated, not only killing the brutes but setting off their own grenades as well, causing a chain reaction that destroyed everything within a meter and a half of them.

David didn't have time to celebrate and all but dove out of the way of a Particle Beam round that had been meant for him, but struck an Elite behind him that uttered the same horrible death cry and collapsed, a hole burned neatly in its chest. A sharp reply came from the ODS'Ts up on the cliffs that picked off not only the Jackal snipers, but brute after brute that would have rivaled even the Spartans. Six or eight brutes fell in sync as the snipers picked the formations apart, aided by the Elites and David's shotgun. David charged headlong into a group of brutes, activated a plasma grenade, slapped it to one's back, rolled aside and decapitated another with a single blast from his shotgun. He fired round after round after round into the Covenant formations, the eight gauge slugs wounding anything that they didn't kill. Over the general din of the battle, David heard the two things he didn't want to hear; the distinctive screech of Covenant Banshees and the whine of a Wraith tank's plasma mortar.

"Incoming air and arty! Scatter the formations! Cassandra, now's your time to show them what you've got!"

Immediately, the Heretic Elites scattered, confusing the brutes momentarily as their own artillery rounds tore them to pieces. David spotted a squad heading toward his position and motioned them to follow him as he let the shotgun hang across his chest by its sling and activated his blade once again. He lowered his shoulders and charged headlong into the brutes, swinging his sword every which way and not giving a damn if he killed them or not, only trying to clear a hole. Finally, he broke through their ranks with only a pair of the six or seven elites he started with and made a mad dash for the opposing Wraith tanks as his own opened up into the brutes. He pulled a plasma grenade from his bandolier, activated his comm and ordered the Elites to do as he did. He leapt up on the nearest of the half-dozen Wraiths, used his sword to cut open the latch, activated the grenade and shoved it down inside. The pilot bellowed as David leapt off the tank and tried to clamber out, but was caught in the explosion and cooked alive as super heated plasma arced through the air. The two Elites followed his example and repeated the steps he'd performed, and the three of them quickly dispatched the few remaining tanks.

David then took the time and glanced up toward the deadly ballet being performed just over a hundred feet above his head. The Elites had been smart enough to repaint their Banshees to a combination of purple and off-brown, giving them an almost ancient and rusted look. The battle looked pretty even at the moment, but Cassandra's squadron seemed to be gaining the upper hand in their fight, as did David's own Heretic force. Deciding to leave everything to 'Takamee and Cassandra, David motioned yet again for the two Elites to follow him into the main compound just to see what they could see. It wasn't a long march to the compound and there weren't enemies to stop them, so the trio had no trouble getting there. Getting in, though, was a problem. The short, squat building at the heart of the complex was sealed at every entrance and the doors were too thick to blast through with the equipment David and his Elites had on hand at the moment.

So, they scavenged around the base for a little while longer before returning to the site of the battle and found what David had expected; the Brutes had been utterly decimated and it looked like a slaughter. Their bodies lay arranged in a completely random pattern, intermitted now and then with Elite corpses and the burned out hulls of a destroyed Banshee or two and limbs now and then. After a few minutes of searching, David found 'Takamee and learned the count; one hundred and thirty five wounded, ninety eight dead and three missing. He nodded and showed 'Takamee to the door.

"We tried knocking, but they don't want to answer" so I say we knock really _really_ loud."

****A/N: Another chapter completed! Awright! As always, folks, read and review!****

23. MIA

****A/N: Sorry about the second update, but I only put the half-finished product up. Ehehe"silly me. Turns out, I had saved two files and, well, you know the rest.****

****Warrior of Virtue: Always a man of few words.****

****Grubby:** Thanks for letting me know. Glad you're enjoying.**

****eliteElite:** Well, Charlie Company's now in its sixth year of revision andâ€¦I can't even count how many rewrites.**

****WillTheWatcher:** Of course! He's a marine with new toys to play with.**

****Jakell:** You're thinking about this from a historical and American point of view, being raised with the views that we, as Americans as a whole, have. Just imagine, however, if you had been raised in a country where the belief was that the Jews were totally at blame for the shoddy condition of your country. Would that not make you angry? I'm not saying all Nazis were brainwashed, and I know it's not an excuse; it's just looking through the other side of the glass.**

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Book II****

****Aftermath****

****Chapter Eight****

****M.I.A****

****September 14, 25520900 Hours, Local Time****

"Three hours, David." Owen said impatiently as he stood beside the Marine that he'd known for about that span of time. "Three hours and not even a scratch."

He was, of course, referring to the door that would lead the combined forces down inside the Covenant compound that had, so far, taken everything they could think of and then some. Even David's patience was wearing thin as the crews tried to come up with something else. He tapped his booted foot against the ground, creating small puffs of dust with each impact of his booted foot. His eyes gazed over the lush landscape, then back to the Covenant compound that had proved to be quite a challenge, then back up to the skies; he was watching for a flight of Banshees that he'd sent out on patrol nearly forty five minutes ago. Surely they would have been back by nowâ€¦or at least sent some sort of message back to the Fury. Nothing had come past the communications crew (he was sure because he checked every five minutes), and not a single Banshee had been sighted on the short-range sensors.

He would have much preferred to go long-range, but with the possibility of CCS-class Capital Ships in the area that didn't seem like a particularly good idea. David was getting more worried by the minute and worst case scenarios began to scroll through his head like a never-ending series of really bad dreams. What if the Covenant had discovered her recon flight and shot them down? Could they have taken her captive? Then, there was always the worst of the worst case scenarios: The Flood. Installation Zero-Zero-Four was a containment and research facility for the Flood built by the Forerunner, and this

installation, Zero-Zero-Seven, was more than likely built along those same lines. If that was the case, then it was a definite possibility that the Flood could be unleashed upon this ring and its inhabitantsâ€|

The memories came after that, flashing in his mind briefly, increasing in pace and intensity along with the gruesome scenes. David felt his knees begin to buckle as the gruesome voice boomed in his mind, spelling doom for his kind and for the life of the universe. Suddenly, the illusion shattered as someone nudged David and caused him to nearly jump out of his boots.

"You okay, Sarge? Hey, Sarge! Anyone home?"

David nodded slowly as he desperately fought to catch his breath, right hand clutched to his chest as though he were in pain. Sweat rolled down his brow as the strength his legs once knew returned to him. Now that he had stabilized himself, David found himself staring at a rather upset looking Lieutenant Frost. Worried probably would have been a better word, David thought, but upset could definitely have been mistaken there.

"Yeahâ€|yeah, I'm fine, sir."

"Cut the 'sir' bullshit, Sarge. We both know you're in charge here. Anyway, you look like shit. Are you sure you're all right?"

This time, David paused for a brief moment and mentally checked himself over. What in the hell had just happened, anyway? Sure, he'd had flashbacks before and all of them left him a bit short of breath, but this oneâ€|there was something different about it. It seemed less of a memory and more of a premonition of what was possibly to come. Why in the world was this happening to him of all possible people? Why not someone like Master Chief or Sergeant Johnson? For most of his life, David had been a nobody. He'd been just your average Joe, G.I. Joe, Jarhead or whatever anyone called him and that didn't bother him a damn bit. The limelight never appealed to David, but the way things were going, he was going to shine in it no matter what. The thoughts lingered for another moment or two before he got back on track and nodded at Lieutenant Frost.

"I'll be fine. I'm just a little bit worried about Cassandra is all. She should have reported in by now." Owen didn't seem very convinced, but nodded and clapped David on the shoulder reassuringly.

"Don't worry, David. If Cassandra's half as tough as I've heard you are, she'll be fine. You served on Jericho Four and Reach, right?"

David nodded slowly. "My first combat op was on Jericho. That wasâ€|six or seven years ago now. I was still a kid." He paused for a second and reminisced. "Technically, I wasn't even with the Corps and was supposed to be evacuating with everyone else. My brother and I got caught there at the Tera spaceport and took up arms with the local Marines and militia. First time I ever saw a SPARTAN."

Owen's eyes widened. "You fought with a SPARTAN on Jericho?"

"Four, actually. I think they called themselves Delta Squad. He wasn't there, but Johnson was." By 'He', David meant the God of War

himself; Master Chief. Whether directly or indirectly, Chief has saved David's life more times than he could imagine. Whenever news spread through the Covenant ranks of the "Demon", massive amounts of troops would be relocated to search and destroy and the rest would resume what turned into suicide charges most of the time. Needless to say, David admired the SPARTANS but he certainly did not envy them.

"What are they like? SPARTANS, I mean."

David grinned to himself. For a Helljumper, the good Lieutenant seemed to be asking a lot of questions about the soldiers they were supposed to hate the most and had an almost a childlike fascination with them, from what he could tell.

"Most of them don't talk much. Hell, they really don't have time to. As soon as they're done one place, the brass moves them somewhere else. Sometimes, I don't think those bastards even see the SPARTANS as humans. Then again, we're all tools to those guys who only care about statistics and planning, so they're really not all that different from us in that regard.

David paused.

"They're not as heartless as most people think. I've seen SPARTANS mourn over the loss of their fellows and even us Marines and ODSTs. I guess they're like family to one another, and we're like distant relatives; cousins, you could say."

Owen nodded slowly and soaked all the information in. He opened his mouth to speak again, but never did; his eye was diverted upward by the shrill whine of a Banshee engine. David glanced skyward as well and scanned the skyline; surely the CIC (Command Information Center) would inform him of any enemies in the area, so they really didn't have anything to worry about...unless CIC screwed up, in which case he and Owen would be a crater soon. Finally, the lone Banshee came into view with a thick trail of inky black smoke behind it.

"Oh no!" David said in a hushed whisper. "Owen, let's go!"

The pair took off at a dead sprint for the gravity lift, trailed by three or four other Heretics that had caught sight of the banshee. It activated as soon as everyone was on the pad and pulled the five beings aboard the Ancient Fury, where 'Takamee was waiting for them. Before David even had time to speak, 'Takamee was sprinting in the direction of the proper hangar and the others followed suit. He slapped his helmet on his head in order to avoid carrying it and the comm snapped on immediately afterward.

"Ship Master! There's a-" barked Ungarr, the ship's communications operator.

"I know about the Banshee, Ungarr! We're on our way!"

"No! There's a human ship in orbit! 'Eksa has it marked as the In Amber Clad!"

David logged that away for later and continued onward behind 'Takamee and onward to the hanger he'd labled 4C. The Banshee had made a bit of a rough landing (the skidmarks on the hangar deck proved that),

and looked like it had barely made it back. Both stabilizers were marred beyond repair and bullet holes and plasma scoring scarred the hull. The pilot, an Elite named 'Enzo Malakee, appeared to just barely be alive and was surrounded by medical personnel, human and Unggoy. David slid on his knee next to the Elite.

"What happened out there, 'Enzo? Where's Cassandra? Where's the rest of the flight?"

"Theâ€|the parasiteâ€|" Enzo said in barely a whisper. "Theyâ€|have herâ€|"

****September 14, 25521900 Hours, Local Time****

Everything was finally in place. The scouting parties David had sent out spotted a large formation of Flood heading North toward what appeared to be an ancient Forerunner facility. It was massive, squat and scarred the surrounding landscape. The facility was built like a fortress, but exposed right out in the middle of an open field, making it easy to attack from all angles. Speed was a key factor; the quicker David and his troops could get in and out of that place, the less chance there was that any of them would be infected by the Flood. He stared at the holomap intently, marking possible trouble spots with large red circles as the strategy formulated in his head. Since the installation consisted of a series of walls, catwalks, ramps and interconnected halls and rooms, the easiest thing to do would be go in with a small squad of elite troops to avoid detection by the Flood as long as possible and leave a large force behind in reserve to cover their retreat if something went wrong or their extraction of all went right.

David would enter personally with seven handpicked crack troops, search the compound, locate Cassandra and extract her and any other captives they could find. After that, they'd extract to a predesignated extraction point and wait for the Phantoms that would be standing by. Once they were clear, the Wraiths would begin pounding the Flood David assumed would be trailing the squad and captives, until the _Fury_'s weapons could be powered up. That would be the simple part he knew; simply take the _Fury_ over the compound and blast it into dust particles, along with any Flood nearby, eliminating a large threat to his ship and his crew. David laughed. _His_ ship and _his_ crew were words he honestly believed he'd never find himself saying, but there they were. Now, though, he had a plan to roll over with his company leaders and XO.

"Takameeâ€|I want all company COs and you in the war room ASAP. I've got a plan."

"_Right away._"

He cut the comm. link before 'Takamee had a chance to add in another word like David knew he would. Something was bothering David still; why would the Flood suddenly be interested in taking prisoners? There must have been some kind of greater power working behind the scenes hereâ€|something commanding and controlling the Flood here on this Halo. The images captured of the compound proved that in themselves. Instead of a disorganized mob of untamable beasts, these Flood were a unit; there were two guards patrolling the grassy plains on each side of the structure with another two waiting at the doorways. They changed shift roughly every hour or so, and each guard was armed

differently; Jackhammers, A2s, MA5Bs, BR55s, Carbines, Plasma Rifles, Plasma Pistols—it seemed like these things were toting every armament under the sun. The Marine tapped his foot impatiently as he tried to figure out the only thing he hadn't put much thought into; the insertion. A Phantom would be too risky and it would blow their cover, but a ground insertion would be equally as difficult. That added to the fact that everything about this looked, felt and smelled like a trap served to increase his growing agitation with the situation.

He cursed under his breath until the chime of a door opening drug his attention away from the map; a myriad of armored Elites were filing in, each saluting the Ship Master in their own distinct way. The last one to enter was 'Takamee and then all fell silent as the Elites formed a row at attention and waited for David to speak. He eyed his troops for a few fleeting moments before enlarging the image on the holoprojector for the two dozen Elites to see.

"I've called you all here for a reason. As you may or may not know, the Flood recently attacked one of our recon flights and shot down several Banshees. Instead of turning the survivors, as they normally would, they have taken members of Cassandra's recon flight prisoner. I've been monitoring the facility closely and have decided that the only way in undetected is one man; I'm going. Any force larger than that would be detected before we even got close; I want to limit casualties as much as possible. While I'm away, 'Takamee is in charge."

David eyed the Elites in the room, looking for any disgruntled or insulted faces, but found none. He grinned softly and continued.

"I'll insert here, around two kilometers outside the facility's perimeter and work my way inside; this could be a lengthy process. Once I'm on the ground, I want total radio silence. Since the Flood retain their former memories, they could have insight on how to operate communications equipment and could pirate our frequencies. 'Tekamah, I want your officers to keep an eye on that."

The Veteran nodded.

"Now, once I've located and liberated all the captives I can, we'll begin the exfiltration. Since the facility is located in the middle of a grassland, there are four RZ points, designated Utah, Omaha, Gold and Juno. 'Muscatel will be piloting the Phantom and will relay to me the clearest of the four zones. I want the _Fury_'s entire combat crew on alert and ready to defend from an attack as soon as this briefing is over. 'Jescazee, 'Fuzamee, have the wraith crews zero their sights in the quarter-kilometer area around the Flood facility. Once my team is past that mark, I want the artillery fire to commence to cover our retreat until 'Muscatel picks us up. After that, 'Takamee will bring the _Fury_ into firing range of the facility and wipe it off the face of the map. Any questions?"

No one said a thing.

"All right then. 'Takamee, bring the ship up to combat alert status. Company leaders, update your platoon leaders on the situation; I want those tank crews up and going ASAP. 'Muscatel, let's go."

As the officers in the room scrambled out to give their orders, the purple clad Elite and David slowly exited and began to make their way toward the hangar. David's thoughts soon began to swirl with worst case scenarios that he really didn't feel like thinking about and tried to shut out. He didn't have time to worry about such nonsense; Cassandra was strong, he knew that, and wouldn't give up to the Flood without a fightâ€|that also meant it was more likely she was dead if they didn't feel like putting up with any rowdy prisoners. David grit his teeth and clenched his fist as he and 'Muscatel boarded the Phantom and the pilot Elite headed forward to the cockpit. There were a couple of minutes between then and the Phantom going airborne, but David soon felt the familiar feeling of his stomach sinking as the drop ship pushed upward and the jolt of acceleration.

24. To The Rescue and Bad News

****A/N: After another bout of writer's block, I am back! Whoo! Reviews, you say? But of course!****

****Aphotica: _What?_****

****WilltheWatcher: I am now, thanks. ****

****The Marines of Charlie Company****

****Book II****

****Aftermath****

****Chapter 9****

****To the Rescueâ€|and Bad News.****

****Recommended Song: Requiem for a Dream LotR: Two Towers Soundtrack****

****September 14, 2552: 2200 Hours, local time****

David grimaced and grunted as his feet hit the ground a little more sharply than he had predicted, even with the shields absorbing most of the blow. His Phantom had just reached the LZ and he jumped without the aid of the gravity lift to ease his fall; the bright purple glow would have definitely drawn a little more attention than he and 'Muscatel felt like dealing with at the time being. Though glad to have somewhat solid ground beneath his feet again, David pushed forward with barely a second thought; he had a mission to deal with. Thankfully, the grass in the field surrounding the Flood-infested complex was tall and thick; he barely needed to crouch to be fully concealed, but could still stand up and see over it if need be. The Halo must've rotated to the planet's dark side because the 'sky' had become pitch dark His gut instincts were screaming 'Trap! Trap! Turn around and go back!', but his heart and mind were set on the task at hand; whether or not Cassandra was inside, some of his troops were and, as their leader, he had a responsibility to them. No man, woman, Elite or Grunt would be left behind as long as David was in charge.

Hardly a sound could be heard as he sprinted in a low crouch through the thick grass toward the towering structure the Flood had holed up

in. David knew the structure was large from the bird's-eye views, but this was ridiculous; the large spire that stretched up from the base to the sky had to have been at least two hundred feet up and fifty feet around. The marine was impressed to say the least and repressed the urge to whistle in awe of the sight, mainly to avoid detection. Red blips appeared on David's radar and he froze; they were no more than ten meters away. Though tempted just to strike the creatures down, he waited the five antagonizing minutes for them to go their separate ways and darted up the ramp inside the structure and the darkness within. David activated the built-in night vision, which basically painted the surrounding environment with infrared beams and green light. That made it easier for the human eye to pick out human shapes in the darkness at a distance and tables or other obstacles at shorter distances; it was a blessing for night time or dark operations. David silently thanked whoever invented it.

The task that lay before David was daunting; for all he knew, the structure he was attacking by himself could stretch on for miles underground and, worse yet, be filled to the brim with Flood or Covenant or Flood and Covenant OR worse. Who knew? David crept along at a slow pace for the first moments of his incursion, then picked up the pace significantly; time was most definitely not on his side, and neither were the odds. Twenty feet or so past the entry was a three-pronged fork in the path. He paused only for a brief second before breaking to the right; his instincts had never failed him before and he doubted they would now. Much to his surprise, the right path was a dead-end with no secret panels, no hidden objects, no nothing. The left corridor proved the same, as did the center. David cursed loudly when realization struck; there were no prisoners here. The Flood had moved them a long time ago and he'd walked right into their trap. There was no way for him to escape and the walls were far too thick for him to cut through, so David sat cross-legged in the middle of the four-way intersection, closed his eyes and resigned himself to wait for the inevitable onslaught. He knew he wouldn't have to wait long and almost anticipated the fight; the Flood had murdered and twisted his fellow Marines before, and now they had the gall to attack his crew? Such actions would not be tolerated, not in the least bit. The time had come. They were here.

The walls seemed to all but fall away and revealed the somewhat nasty secret within. A snarling, writhing, flowing green mass of twisted forms and crimes against nature. At first, they seemed surprised—almost shocked that only one had come, but that quickly passed and the first of the flood came screaming the horrible, high pitched wail as it attacked. In a flash, the marine was on his feet and striking back. Not with a sword or a rifle or a handgun, but with his fists. He snatched the combat form out of the air by the ankle (he was sure it must have been an Elite), pivoted on his heel and hurtled the creature using its own momentum into the sea of Flood on the other side. Bodies met at somewhat high speed and with great force and many tumbled to the ground, crushed by their brother's weight. Another cry shattered the night's peace from behind David, who simply stepped aside as the attacking Flood slammed to the ground. This one had a distinctly human shape, but that did not deter David who slammed his fist as hard as he could into the chest cavity, gripped the sternum and planted his back foot, pivoted and slung the combat form as hard as he could into its brothers. Goopy innards clung to his gauntlets and forearm guards, dripping thickly to the floor. He tested the viscous green substance by rubbing the tips of his index finger and thumb together before trying to clean his glove

off with several sharp snaps of his arm. The stuff was _incredibly_ sticky and just wouldn't come off, no matter how hard he shook his arm.

Suddenly, all of the flood froze in their places and David froze too; he could hear some sort of rumble up above him and the realization that he'd completely forgotten about the orders he'd given only a short while before. Now, the memory had returned to him as the _Ancient Fury_ hovered above, its guns humming and glowing an angry red as they prepared to fire. There was only one thing David could think to say.

"_Shit_."

He knew he had to run, knew he had to get away, but also knew that escaping that much firepower on foot was damn near impossible. He would try, though; surrender was not a word in David's vocabulary. He started to run, right foot first, but then noticed something odd as he pushed downward to propel himself forward; there was _no floor_. Surprised, David looked down to see that a small section of the floor, barely big enough for a man to fall through had slid away and he had stepped right into it. Perfect. He had only enough time to utter a brief cry before falling into the black depth of the hole and tumbling down what he could only assume was a shaft. David's first indication that it was indeed such a thing was his head slamming into one of the shaft's sides, turning him so that his legs were going first. For what seemed like forever, David felt like an old twentieth century cartoon banging down the shaft, being bounced around like a pinball. Suddenly, there was nothing; no walls, no shaft, no sidesâ€¦nothing. David almost breathed a sigh of relief, but fate seemed to have a cruel sense of humor. Just as he exhaled, he felt a searing pain in his back as the ground hit him with bone-shattering speed.

For a little while, David just lay on his back like a turtle and groaned as the bolts of pain that electrified his body slowly subsided and he was able to move into a sitting position and try to figure out where exactly he was. He could hear the dull 'thump thump thump' of the _Fury_'s weapons above him and tried to activate the suit's built in night vision, but nothing happened. It must have been damaged in the fall, he thought, and then tried the torchlight. Thankfully, that worked and a small, cone-shaped beam of light streamed from his helmet. The view before him made him whistle.

He was in what looked like an underground cave at first, but upon further inspection, he found it was more like a bunker. The walls were far too reinforced and far too smooth to be a natural formation, but were not made of the same turquoise material that other structures on the ring were made of. Instead, this bunker seemed to have been dug straight out of the earth and reinforced with roots and vines somehow. In the center of the enormous bunker was a large ring, ten or fifteen feet in diameter, with a pedestal resting at its exact center, standing three or four feet high. His curiosity peaked; David slowly approached the ring and stepped into it, wary of any forms of traps or other such devices, and slowly crept forward toward the pedestal. A pale blue light pulsated at the top and a holographic panel at the middle of its base, projecting a small sphere of the exact same color outward. It seemed to call to David, who knelt down and touched the hologram that shied away from his fingers. The sphere danced for a moment and hovered in front of a key on the panel; he

tapped it and the sphere moved to another. He tapped that one, too. Again, it moved. Another tap, another move. Again, he tapped the holographic key and for a fourth time, the sphere moved. When David tapped the fifth key, the sphere lazily wandered to the top of the pedestal and came to rest atop its sister light, which slowly rose from its resting place like a switch.

Curiosity burned at David's heart and mind as he stood, glancing about for anything that looked like a booby trap yet again, and inhaled a breath. Satisfied that there were no traps for the moment, he reached out with his right hand and pushed downward on the switch that had so recently emerged and the entire room came to life. Systems that had to be millennia old suddenly sparked to life as a dizzying array of panels, switches, lights and other miscellaneous things burst outward. He immediately dropped to a kneeling position and glanced around, then back up to the pedestal; there before him were three forerunners. The same three that he had encountered in his dreams what seemed like a dozen times before.

"Welcome, Reclaimer, to the last bastion of the Forerunner." Spoke all three at the same time, gesturing to the bunker with their robed arms.

"You're constructs?" David asked, more than a little confused. "How have you spoken with me?"

The Forerunner laughed as Manaan answered.

"We are not constructs as you are used to, Reclaimer. Before we activated the Halos, three Guardians were chosen for each one and our spirits were then fused with the systems of Halo. Some became monitors; others the systems of Halo themselves."

"We have reached out to you, David Carson," said Tier'Thal, "using our spirit energy. It is a laborious activity, hence why our contact with you is so terribly short. Even though you are here now, time is short; the Flood are mobilizing. Their General is awoken."

General? The Flood had a General? He supposed it was possible that there was some sort of higher-intelligence that controlled the Flood like a hive of bees or colony of ants, but to actually have a General commanding them—well, he just never thought that could have happened. For the most part, the Flood seemed to lack any tact or tactical intelligence at all, but they had launched several successful attacks against the Covenant and UNSC, so that probably wasn't as far-fetched as it seemed at first glance.

"What are they planning?" he asked.

"We do not know exactly," Manaan began, "but we can only assume that it has something to do with the Ark."

"Ark?"

"It has the power to unleash the full fury of the Halos upon the galaxy should they be placed in stasis."

"Where is the Ark?"

"Your homeworld."

25. Temporary Update

****Temporary Update****

I just want to let the readers know that a new chapter of Charlie Company is on the way. I would like to apologize for the antagonizing wait, but school (as always) and other events have kept me extraordinarily busy. Writer's block has struck yet again and I'm nearly sapped of ideas. Any suggestions would be extremely helpful and I look forward to your responses.

Again, I apologize for the wait.

Thanks, all

Sykotik

End
file.